

DUDLEY CHRONICLE



Thursday, January 3, 2013

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Packing it up

Mayor lends a hand to help support victims

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Fond farewell

Teacher takes retirement after 40 years with pupils

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Scoring chance

DK's fight to the last is no consolation in derby

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50 trees at beauty spot 'cut for fuel'

MORE than 50 trees have been chopped down illegally at a Dudley beauty spot.

It is thought they will be used for fuel as the number of people using wood burners increases.

Worried conservationists are appealing for help to nip in the bud the growing trend of raiding the Coombeswood Wedge, Halesowen for firewood.

The Friends of Coombeswood have put up notices warning that felling is not allowed at the beauty spot and are appealing to walkers who use the area to report any incidents to police if they spot illegal activity going on.

Chairman Sue Yeadon said: "A considerable amount of damage has been caused and we think it is by local people who have seen that wood has been chopped and think they might get away with it, too."

"There has been a rise in people having wood burners - and we believe some are seeing Coombeswood Wedge as a way of saving on fuel."

"But, not only is it decimating the woodland, it is also causing a health and safety hazard because people could trip over trees which have been chopped down, with the wood, presumably, left for collection later."

Market plan movement

PROPOSALS for a £6 million revamp of Dudley's market place will be lodged in the new year. Dudley Council has been working on detailed designs with traders as it waits to hear if a bid for funding has been successful.

Bosses are hoping to secure £3m towards the project from the European Regional Development Fund.

Under the plans, new stalls with canopies will be created while the ageing toller block would be moved to create an unobstructed view to the town's castle.

£6m ENGINEERING HUB IN PIPELINE

By Louise Jew

THE latest phase of Dudley College's ambitious town centre "learning quarter" – an ultra modern £6.6 million manufacturing and engineering hub – looks set to be approved.

No objections have been raised to the Dudley Advance scheme, although a report to the borough's planning committee says the building could be criticised for having a "box type form". But the council's urban design officers say it would be suitable for its purpose and would become a "theme building of mechanical steel-clad quality that suggests its hi-tech activity through its architectural shape, materials and punctuation of windows".

The borough's Historic Environment Team considers the development would be "an iconic and intentionally modern building that reflects its future role in fostering the development of cutting edge technology."

The planning committee will be recommended to approve the scheme at its meeting on January 7.

Dudley College heard last month it had been awarded a £2.2 million grant from the Skills Funding Agency – a third of the cost of the development of the Dudley Advance centre for advanced manufacturing and engineering technologies in Priory Road.

The announcement was made when Business Secretary Vince Cable visited the college to open the new Evolve sixth form centre, which is next door to the proposed manufacturing and engineering base.

Emphasis

The centre will have a heavy emphasis on the development of science, technology, engineering and maths and will form part of the wider, £55 million, learning quarter for the college.

The site will be based on part of a car park that was previously the site of the former Dudley Girls High School, which was demolished in 1996.

The planning officers' report says: "This redevelopment scheme represents another significant component of Dudley College's high profile project, aimed at consolidating its educational base within Dudley town centre."

Also at the January 7 meeting, councillors will be asked to approve revised plans, scaling down the size of the college's new centre for construction, motor vehicle and engineering courses on The Broadway campus.

Instead of a building rising to three and four storeys, the centre will range from two to three storeys.

It will be produced by Ridley Scott and written by Rowan Joffe, whose previous hits include Brighton Rock and The American starring George Clooney.

Mr Watson, aged 41, started writing the book as a hobby while working as an audiology specialist and now admits he may never return to his old job. The book shot to number one in the Sunday Times paperback chart after being chosen by Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan for their Book Club.

Book filming due to start

Filming will start on the movie adaptation of a Dudley author's debut novel later this year, he revealed – as he looks back over an "incredible year".

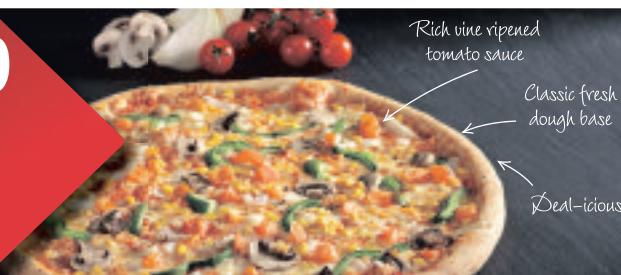
Hollywood actress Nicole Kidman will star in the film, which is based on the Stourbridge-born writer's Before I Go To Sleep.

The novel tells the story of a woman who wakes up to find she does not recognise her life. It is currently in pre-production with filming due to begin in January or February, said the author, who writes under the name SJ Watson.

It will be produced by Ridley Scott and written by Rowan Joffe, whose previous hits include Brighton Rock and The American starring George Clooney.

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Progress made over proposals on church

A BID by campaigners to take over a Dudley church has cleared the first hurdle after being submitted to the Diocese of Worcester.

The St John's Church Preservation Group has put in a business plan and reopening schedule for the Grade II-listed building in Kates Hill, which has been closed for 10 years.

The proposals have gone before the Worcester of Diocese's pastoral committee and been passed on to the closed churches committee.

If approved, the business plan will be passed on to the Church Commissioners in London to make a decision on whether to allow the preservation group to lease the building.

Members want to keep the 173-year-old church building, which is described as "a virtually intact Victorian church" as unaltered as possible but will restore some of the old features such as the lychgate.

They want to be able to resume Christian worship and host events and shows, community groups and events to foster multi cultural understanding.

The group plans to carry out the restoration work in small stages beginning with the drains and waterproofing, expected to cost £2,000.

Hunt on for bank robber

POLICE are hunting an armed robber who threatened staff at the Royal Bank of Scotland in Dudley town centre and took thousands of pounds. It was believed the raider had a concealed weapon. No-one was hurt during the raid on the High Street bank at 10.15am on Christmas Eve.

Detective Constable Stephen Goddard said: "High Street would have been busy with Christmas shoppers at the time and we want to hear from anyone who saw the man responsible and can help us identify him." Call 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Bronze Kristian vaults his way to duchess duties

Kristian with the Duchess of Cambridge during the men's pommel horse final

KRISTIAN Thomas was Wolverhampton's biggest success story at the Olympics after his stunning bronze medal win.

The Wednesfield gymnast was part of the Team GB squad who claimed the first men's team gymnastic medal in 100 years at London 2012. His final high bar and floor routine at the North Greenwich Arena secured bronze for the team - after they were briefly elevated to silver in an afternoon of drama.

Only Japan's successful appeal, which left them in second place, denied Team GB an

even better result - but Thomas, who trains at the Earls Gymnastics Club, Halesowen, admits he couldn't believe his success.

"I keep looking down at the medal and I'm amazed," said the 23-year-old.

"There was a lot of pressure on that routine. I was very confident I could go through it successfully. We've put in all the hard work and it was a matter of controlling the nerves and letting the body take over."

He finished seventh in the all-round event and eighth in the vault final as the Team GB

gymnasts collected the team bronze. And Thomas believes British Gymnastics, which is based at Lilleshall, is about to explode after their achievements.

"It's been pretty surreal," said Kristian, who found himself sitting next to the Duchess of Cambridge discussing the finer points of the pommel event. "The aim from British Gymnastics was to come away with one medal but to get a team medal and three other individual medals has been fantastic. Let's hope it's a new era."

our golden girl**Tears then cheers for Jordanne**

IT was a case of tears to cheers for Halesowen's Jordanne Whiley after she bounced back from semi-final heartbreak to claim wheelchair tennis doubles bronze at the Paralympics Games.

Whiley and partner Lucy Shuker were left inconsolable after seeing their gold medal dreams ended by Dutch pair Aniek van Koot and Jiske Griffioen.

After picking themselves up Whiley and Shuker sought the consolation of a bronze medal against a pair from Thailand. Despite losing the first set and slipping to a 3-0 deficit and match point in the second, they battled back to win.

Whiley said afterwards: "It was such hard work and it's such a relief."

I'll be back, says Varnish

JESS Varnish vowed to batte back from her Olympic heartbreak as she sets her sights on Rio. The 21-year-old from Bromsgrove suffered a nightmare after she and team sprint partner Victoria Pendleton were demoted from the final.

They were guaranteed silver but disqualified after Pendleton passed Varnish, a member of Halesowen Cycling Club, too early on the final lap. But Varnish insisted her Velodrome frustration on her Olympic debut will not break her. "It makes me feel sick thinking about it but I'm going to get over it," she said.

Great Scott!

HALESOWEN'S Helen Scott has committed her future to racing for Paralympic gold with Aileen McGlynn in Rio. Scott, the sighted pilot to tandem rider McGlynn, claimed bronze in the tandem pursuit after winning silver with McGlynn in the 1km time trial and wants to complete the set in four years.



Ellie Simmonds receives one of her gold medals at the Paralympics and, inset, at the BBC's Sports Personality of Year award ceremony

the home crowd. I felt like I had a lot of pressure on me," said Simmonds, who won 100m and 400m freestyle S6 in Beijing in 2008. It means so much to win a gold at your home Paralympics and the pressure was quite hard to deal with.

"The crowd were amazing, they got me to that wall first. People expected me to get gold, which was not the case with Victoria on the scene. It was a five-second personal best and I knew it would be so tough leading into it with Victoria being in such good form."

Simmonds' biggest concern pre-Games was that she would cry again in her post-race interviews, the teenager admitting she still can't watch her Beijing performances because her emotions embarrass her. It was one target she didn't achieve as the waterworks flowed

after her victories - and her bronze in the 50m.

It was her fourth strongest event and Simmonds was ranked fourth going into the final but produced a fine swim to claim third. Outsiders may think that a failure, but Simmonds admitted her shock at even making the podium.

"That was a massive surprise. This is my fourth event and I was going into the final fourth so I didn't expect that," she said.

"I was hoping to go for a personal best and see what happened and so to get a bronze, I will definitely take that."

Bulldog Pollock**Clarke challenge****Time for studies**

NO-ONE epitomises the British bulldog spirit more than wheelchair basketball player Jon Pollock but, as he battled through the pain barrier, the USA added insult to injury by denying Great Britain a third consecutive Paralympic bronze medal. The 35-year-old Wolverhampton Rhinos star was forced to undergo a pain-killing injection in his arm for Great Britain's last six matches but despite his tenacity, he ended his fourth Paralympic Games empty-handed.

DARREN Harris has been challenged to lead Great Britain's five-a-side football team to the medal mix-up at Rio 2016 by retiring legend Dave Clarke after the host nation finished their London 2012 campaign on a high. At 39 and with more than 100 caps to his name, the Wolverhampton ace is among the senior members of the Great Britain team which ended London 2012 with a first win of the competition to finish in seventh place compared to coming fifth at Beijing 2008.

JAMES FAIR has dismissed thoughts on Rio 2016 - and admitted he will concentrate on his studies first. The hockey goalkeeper from Cannock has started teacher training after Team GB's disappointing Olympics. They suffered a nightmare semi-final losing 9-2 to Holland and were beaten by Australia in the bronze medal match. It was a crushing blow for a squad with realistic hopes of gold and Fair admits he has some thinking to do.

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Company is fined for death

A STEEL factory, where a worker was killed after being crushed by a 15-ton overhead crane, has been ordered to pay a total of £146,552 after admitting health and safety breaches.

Wilfred Williams had been working about 20ft off the ground on one of the cranes at C Brown and Sons, in Brierley Hill, on May 27, 2011.

After finishing his task, he stepped from the gantry he was working on to the rail in a nearby bay and sat down.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard a crane was moved by an operator who had not seen the 58-year-old, Mr Williams, from Ashtree Road, Tividale, was crushed.

The firm, in Pedmore Lane, pleaded guilty to charges of breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act and contravening Work at Height Regulations.

It was ordered to pay £120,000 for the Health and Safety Act breach along with legal costs of £16,319, HSE investigation costs of £10,217 and a £15 victim surcharge.

Mrs Fiona Carter, prosecuting, said the firm had been aware of the risks for years. Mr Peter Smith, for the firm, said: "Things were being done but not as quickly as they should have been."

Dry storage for road salt

A SALT barn has been built in Dudley as part of a £1.1 million project to combat the cold weather on the roads.

Thomas Vale Construction has completed work at Dudley Council's Lister Road depot to enable up to 7,500 tons of salt that was stored outside to be covered.

Councillor Judy Foster, cabinet member for transportation, said: "I'm delighted the new salt barn has now been completed. It means the salt can now be stored inside and away from the elements, preventing salt water run off in surrounding areas."

Conversion plan

A VACANT office block in Dudley could be converted into flats. Regal Invest LLP has submitted proposals for Nexion House, The Broadway. It has been empty nearly two years after failing to attract interest from firms wanting office space. Plans for 10 two-bedroom and two one-bedroom apartments have been lodged with Dudley Council.

Canal Christmas ruined in suspected attack



Monica Bett's sinking narrowboat on the canal

MONICA Bett was meant to be enjoying a belated Christmas on board her beloved narrowboat in the Black Country.

But she instead found herself assessing the damage after a suspected vandal attack left the vessel sinking.

She said: "I was meant to be having a late Christmas Day – a cooked breakfast, my Christmas dinner and walking the dogs but I haven't even opened my presents. It's the furthest thing from my mind now."

The 34ft boat had been moored on the

canal in Tipton ready to go through the Netherton tunnel after it reopened in March.

But a few nights ago, Ms Bett, aged 59 – who had been on holiday – was told by a friend her boat had been damaged and was listing side-up in the water.

She said: "It came as a real shock. I've had her 20 years and she's the love of my life. In a way I was lucky it was dark when I first went to see her – it didn't look so bad. It's not yet clear how bad the damage is or what has happened to it."

"If a load of kids got on it and were

hanging from it or something there were air vents in the side and it might be okay but if she had a hole put in her then it would be a bit different."

"It's about 20 per cent under water because the water is very shallow so inside the boat she'll be full of water."

Ms Bett, who lives in Walsall, has spoken to the police and investigations are ongoing.

She has also spent time on the phone to the boat's insurers, adding: "They should cover it but, if they don't, then I don't know what I'll do."

NEWS

in brief

Workers train for peak challenge

WORKERS from a Brierley Hill firm are motoring to be fully fit for a gruelling charity challenge in aid of patients with the bone marrow cancer myeloma.

The group from Auto Styling Truckman, Narrowboat Way, will tackle the Three Peaks Challenge in June and have set themselves a tough training programme to help generate funds for Myeloma UK. Managing director Mike Wheeler said: "We are very proud of the efforts put in by our staff."

The team can be sponsored via www.justgiving.co.uk/autostyling3peaks

Meals at hospital will get overhauled

Patient meals are being revamped at Russells Hall Hospital after people were asked to give their views on the service.

A panel of 10 patients and their carers or family members was set up to discuss the food served up. They shared their experience of the meals and let health chiefs know the areas where they were satisfied as well as where they felt improvements could be made.

Now the hospital is looking at providing an improved choice of meals.

Council in plan for apprentices

TWO young people are to get the chance of apprenticeships with Dudley Council under a plan to create the new opportunities with the electrical and mechanical services team.

They will earn a wage working alongside experienced staff to gain skills and qualifications, funded by the National Apprenticeship Service. The scheme will be in partnership with Dudley College.

Support will help tackle bullying

A SUPPORT worker who will help to tackle bullying at schools in Dudley borough is being appointed by the council.

The anti-bullying coordinator will work with teachers and parents to support children facing problems because of bullies. The 12-month contract will cost a maximum of £23,960.

Antique offering

AN ANTIQUES and collectables fair will take place in the community centre, Worcester Road, Hagley on January 13 from 12.30pm until 5pm.

Heritage centre will boost our waterways, says expert

DUDLEY Canal Trust's new £3 million education, exhibition and heritage centre will put the region's waterways industry on the map, according to a leading expert, as the development moved closer to reality.

Plans for the attraction, which will be called The Portal, have been recommended for approval by planners at Dudley Council.

It will be situated by the Dudley Canal Tunnel entrance at Todds End and built with the help of funding from lottery cash grants and donations.

The two-storey building will be used to tell visitors about the Black Country's industrial past.

Graham Fisher MBE, past president of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Society and a member of the new West Midlands Waterways Partnership, said he was delighted by the development was moving forward.

"The centre will really put Dudley on the map," said Mr Fisher, who has also piloted narrowboats for the trust over the years.

"I'm delighted that the plans have reached this stage and I'm sure it will become a wonderful feature

for the Black Country." Planning officers at Dudley Council have backed the proposals and recommended they are given the go-ahead by councillors at a meeting this month.

A swing bridge would be constructed to enable visitors from the Black Country Living Museum on the opposite side of the canal to access the ticket office, trip boats and heritage centre.

Bosses also plan to install a lift to enable people to get to and from the towpath and visitor embarkation wharf.

The top floor of the centre would provide a direct access from the boat trips car park off Birmingham New Road.

New jobs will be created as part of the development.

The canal trust is inviting members and supporters to make donations to the scheme. For details visit www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk

M-ways pothole bill

MORE than 700 potholes were urgently repaired on the region's motorways in the past two years – costing tens of thousands of pounds.

But only just over one in 10 motorists received compensation payouts after claiming potholes damaged their cars. The Highways Agency said compensation payments are only made where a pothole caused a "major" defect. Figures, released through a Freedom of Information request, reveal a fall in the number of repairs being made year-on-year. In total 245 potholes were repaired on the M6 between J6 for Spaghetti Junction and J15 serving North Staffordshire in 2010/11. But only 156 repairs were needed on the same 39-mile stretch of motorway also serving Great Barr, Wednesbury, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Stafford in 2011/12.

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NEWS

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

WORST Christmas shock. Waking up and discovering you agree with Piers Morgan.

□□□□□

I ONCE visited a school with its own armed guard, as suggested by America's National Rifle Association (and rightly condemned as idiotic by Morgan). The guard was a jovial, slightly overweight soldier sitting in the sunshine outside the head's study in the town of Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel, with his Armalite assault rifle on his knees. The NRA says all schools should have a guard like this to prevent more school massacres. The snag, of course, is that the psychopath preparing to slaughter children knows exactly what is about to happen but the guard does not. In order to kill the children, the gunman would first shoot the guard. No problem.

□□□□□

A PUZZLE from the sales. Why is it the average till operator can hold on to the winter snuffles for ages and then cough or sneeze straight into a handful of your change?

□□□□□

SIMPLE, isn't it? All you have to do to establish what happened by the main gate to Downing Street is to play the silent CCTV footage of "Plebgate" and try to speak the dialogue between officers and Andrew Mitchell, as reported in the official police log. Paul Merton and Daniel Radcliffe performed it as a playlet on Have I Got News For You (BBC1) and there seemed to be far too many words to fit the time available. David Cameron has had access to the police log and the tape for three months. Did he try making the words fit? If not, why not?

□□□□□

BEST party-cracker joke: "I wanted to train as a masseur but they said I'd have to start at the bottom."

□□□□□

A READER reports that, quite out of the blue, his wife has been bombarded with begging letters from half a dozen charities. He handles the household bills and correspondence and she never uses the internet. So how have these charities, who have never bothered his wife before, suddenly become aware of her existence? All he can suggest is that his wife has recently started drawing her state pension. Surely someone at the Department of Work and Pensions cannot be supplying details to charities? I wouldn't be in the least surprised. You would?

□□□□□

THE BBC may have millions of pounds to shower on its bosses and senior managers but, at the bottom of the pile, BBC local radio is strapped for cash. From January 7, instead of getting a local programme, all 39 BBC local-radio stations in England and the Channel Islands will get the same three-hour programme. The job of spinning bad news into good news falls to David Holdsworth, the BBC's Controller, English Regions who says: "Expect a mix of great story telling, focussing on people and places, and debates on the issues that really matter to local communities, wherever they are." Or to put it another way, expect lots of listeners to switch off.

□□□□□

I REFERRED recently to the Queen saving string and wrapping paper at Christmas for the next year's presents. A thought occurred to me as Her Majesty posed for the picture a few days ago with David Cameron's Cabinet. Wouldn't our economy be in better shape if it were in the hands of the 86-year-old lady who saves string, rather than anyone else in the photograph?

□□□□□

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Henry Mitchell and William Butler of M&B



Mitchell's & Butler's had its own fire brigade

Bitter brewery memory

A new book on Britain's lost breweries charts some famous names from the West Midlands. **MARK ANDREWS** talks to the author

IT SEEMS incredible to think that anybody would pay nearly £2 million for a brewery and then pour its beer down the drain.

And it certainly turned out not to be a particularly wise move by Greenall Whitley, when it bought Brierley Hill's much-loved J P Simpkiss brewery, in 1985.

"It's scandalous really, I don't know why they would have bought it," says Chris Arnot, the author of Britain's Lost Breweries and Beers.

Greenall Whitley was a large regional brewer in the north-west of England, which decided the best way to boost its market share was to buy up the smaller, local brewers. And close them down.

The reaction from Black Country drinkers was hostile to say the least. Mary Arnett, who ran The Castle, Lye, recalls how the pub had been doing a healthy lunchtime trade before the takeover.

"But the regulars didn't like the new beers at all, they liked Simpkiss Bitter in particular," she says. "We lost a lot of trade."

"We stuck it out for another 10 months, and then took early retirement. There was a rapid turnover of licensees after that, until the pub closed and they pulled it down."

The demise of the Simpkiss brewery, which was demolished shortly after the Greenall takeover, is one of 30 featured in Arnot's book.

Best

Birmingham-born Arnot is well familiar with the Black Country's famous beers, describing how he would regularly visit the region with his father-in-law during the 1970s to sample the likes of Batham's, Holden's and Simpkiss.

"For me Batham's is still the best, I can't think of a better beer than Batham's," he says, referring to the brewery which still continues to thrive from its base in Brierley Hill.

During the course of writing the book, Arnot spoke to a number of former Simpkiss employees, who each have a fascinating tale to tell about their time at the Dennis Brewery behind the Foley Arms – now the New Wellington – pub in Brettell Lane.

Former drayman Tony Dutton recalls the occasion he had to take brewery owner Dennis Simpkiss's son Jonathan with him, and was warned by Simpkiss senior that under no circumstances should he allow his sports-car loving son to get behind the wheel



An aerial view of the Simpkiss brewery in Brierley Hill – it was demolished shortly after the Greenall Whitley takeover



The former Foley Arms, Brierley Hill – now the New Wellington



Joseph Paskin Simpkiss



who is 63.

"Part of that was down to the fact they had quite a fondness for beer, but I think it was also because the breweries looked after their workers, in terms of low-rent houses and sponsored sporting events, there was quite an esprit de corps."

"The brewery owners were quite paternalistic, they were the last of their breed."

One of the interesting things that is evident from Arnot's book is that while the breweries have long disappeared, many of the beers have survived – some of them being reintroduced by enterprising microbreweries.

The Simpkiss brand, for example, has been bought by Envile Ales, which produces the ale from its brewery just outside Stourbridge, and Joule's was relaunched by former Bass executive Steve Nuttall at Market Drayton in 2009, with the help of Heely, who dug out the old recipe. You can still buy a pint of M&B too, although it is now produced by Brain's Brewery in Burton upon Trent, while small independent brewers are now brewing at the Springfield and Highgate sites.

And while it's easy to feel nostalgic for the famous old breweries of the Midlands, Arnot says the choice and quality of today's beers is probably better than it has ever been.

"Today's microbreweries use the finest ingredients, whereas that is something the old breweries weren't always on top of. Today it's a more discerning market compared to the old days, when they were simply brewing for the working man."

after being taken over by a regional giant, having been bought by Bass-Charrington in 1970, and numerous cost-cutting measures were introduced, from replacing flaked maize with wheat flour, and reducing the number of checks on the running heats of the fermentation vessels.

"There had been complaints from publicans," recalls brewery man Tony Heely. "Customers had been saying that Joule's didn't taste as good as it once did."

Four years after the takeover, Bass decided to close the historic brewery, and transferred production to Burton-upon-Trent.

The closure was not well-received by real ale buffs in the area, with members of the newly formed Campaign for Real Ale branch organising a mock funeral procession through the streets of Stone. Today a supermarket occupies part of the old brewery site.

Biggest

But the biggest of all the Midland breweries featured Arnot's book's Mitchell's & Butler's, which in its prime had plants in Smethwick, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

The Wolverhampton plant, which produced Springfield bitter, closed in 1991, and was later hit by a devastating fire, while the M&B headquarters in Cape Hill, Smethwick, closed in 2002.

Arnot says that one common theme throughout his research was the fondness which many former brewery workers had for their workplaces.

"They really loved their jobs, despite the fact that they were often doing really hard jobs, moving things around," says Arnot,

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Fears over bad smells from site

FAMILIES who would be neighbours of a proposed waste recycling plant in Brierley Hill could suffer 'offensive' odour from the development, an environmental watchdog claims.

Clean Power has been told by the Environment Agency it will have to prove the plant has adequate odour controls before it gets a permit.

Even if the firm gets permission, the agency said it could not guarantee homes 200ft from the site would escape bad emissions. It said failure to follow procedures could involve a risk of offensive smells outside the boundary.

Firm bosses insist they will have adequate controls and say nearby homes will not pick up any odours.

The plant is earmarked for a six-acre site off Moor Street.

In a letter to Dudley Council, Environment Agency planning liaison team leader, Laura Perry said: "Because of the nature of the proposed activities, any breakdown or failure to follow procedures is likely to involve a risk of offensive emissions outside the site."

Gavin Miller, a spokesman for Clean Power, said the plant would have adequate odour controls.

£130m for better Metro

An agreement has been signed which seals a £130 million package of improvements for passengers on the Midland Metro.

Centro and the tram system's operator National Express have teamed up as part of the partnership called Metro Forward which will see the two organisations working together to improve the system running between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

The partnership agreement was formally signed at Snow Hill Station in Birmingham by representatives from both sides. Improvements will include increased frequency and capacity with the introduction of 20 larger trams.

Sandwich spread

PLANS to extend a post office on a Dudley estate to create a sandwich shop have been lodged with Dudley Council by Jardvinda Jawandha. Under the proposals an extension would be built at the back of the premises in Russells Hall Road, Russells Hall.

Delight over spruced-up hospital gates

GATES at the site of the old Corbett Hospital in Stourbridge have been renovated following calls from campaigners.

About £5,000 has been spent sprucing up the gates at what was the entrance to the former hospital.

Campaigners said the light blue ornate wrought iron gates, in High Street, Amblecote, were in a desperate state of repair.

They had become rusty and badly bent, after a car was thought to have hit them, prompting ward councillor Christine Perks to raise their plight.

She was aided by Councillor Dave Tyler to trace ownership through borough artist Steve Field to Dudley NHS.

Health service bosses ordered a clean-up

which has now been completed. Councillor Perks said: "They really have been smartened up, which is great."

The Corbett site is now managed by Dudley NHS, and the Stourbridge Health and Social Care Centre is based there.

Dudley NHS spokesman Lindsey Harding said the organisation had found cash in its capital programme to cover the cost.

Welcome

The work on the gates, which are more than 100 years old, has also been welcomed by local historians.

Corbett Hospital, now an outpatients' centre, has been rebuilt in nearby Vicarage Road.



Councillors Dave Tyler and Christine Perks in front of recently-restored gates

Tears for navy widow after Arctic Convoy medal victory

Mayor gets packing to support charity



Mayor Melvyn Mottram packs shopping in aid of Victim Support with customer services manager Val Morgan, left, Councillor Christine Perks, Mayoress Michelle Mottram, Bev Cartt, from Victim Support and customer Tony Butler

THE Mayor of Dudley helped pack volunteers from Victim Support, who

were all raising cash for the charity. It

and the shoppers for handing over the cash.

raise cash for charity.

Councillor Melvyn Mottram and his wife Michelle assisted people at Sainsbury's in Amblecote, Stourbridge in the run up to Christmas.

They were joined by around a dozen

has branches in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley.

The charity's Wolverhampton service delivery manager, Alan Brown, said: "We really appreciate the efforts put in by the volunteers

and the charity depends on the cash to support volunteers who aim to help victims of crime overcome their trauma and move on with their lives.

"Without donations, we would not be here to help."

A CAMPAIGNING widow from Dudley is overjoyed after being told her husband would finally get a war medal for delivering crucial supplies to Russia during the Second World War.

Phyllis Coyle, aged 84, has called for the Royal Navy veterans, including her late husband Mick, who took part in the arctic convoys to get the recognition they deserved.

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced in Parliament that the men who helped take vital fuel, food and munitions to the Eastern Front will get a Arctic Convoy Star.

More than 3,000 seaman were killed in the 78 convoys that delivered supplies to the Red Army to push back the Nazis.

Mrs Coyle, of Derwent Close, Pensnett, lost Mick two years ago to lung cancer when he was aged 85.

Danger

He served as a stoker with the Royal Navy between 1942 and 1947, sailing with four convoys to Russia.

Before he died, he too campaigned for recognition.

Mrs Coyle said: "When they called to tell me I cried – it's been 65 years, what a long wait but finally we got it.

I'm just so sad Mick never saw it, he would have been so happy.

"He and thousands of men faced so much danger, but got no recognition from the British Government."

The men had, however, been recognised by the Russian Government, which has sent four medals to Mr Coyle since the war.

On a visit to the country



Arctic veteran Mick Coyle



Widow Phyllis Coyle

five years ago, Mrs Coyle said they pair were "treated like royalty".

It is thought 66,500 men sailed on the convoys, but only 200 are alive today.

Earlier this year, Mrs Coyle unveiled a memorial to the sailors at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas. She was joined by Dudley North MP Ian Austin at the event.

He said: "This is a huge tribute to Phyllis Coyle. She's campaigned tirelessly for greater recognition for the brave men, including her husband Mick, who served on the arctic convoys."

NEWS

in brief

New homes plan for fire station

PLANS to demolish a former fire station and build 14 homes in its place have been recommended for approval.

West Midlands Fire Service wants permission to knock down the base in Halesowen to make way for the housing development. It had originally applied to build 22 homes but this proved controversial with residents living near the former station in Hagley Road. More than 40 people signed a petition over traffic fears.

But under the new outline plans the development would have 12 three and four-bedroom houses, and an access would be created on to Hagley Road.

Footballers visit children's ward

PLAYERS and backroom staff from Dudley Town FC wished Merry Christmas to the children's ward in Dudley's Russell's Hall Hospital. It was the seventh annual visit by the club to meet nurses and doctors and chat to youngsters on the wards.

Chairman Steve Austin organised the event and rallied fundraising in the changing room. Games, toys and chocolates were given to the children and the nurses and doctors received treats.

Trees drop-off service at centre

A GARDEN centre near Stourbridge is offering residents the chance to recycle their Christmas trees. Families can take their trees to Webs Garden Centre, West Hagley, between January 5 and 9.

Last year hundreds of people made use of the free service. The trees are made into chippings which are then composted for a year and used as mulch around the centre.

Betting firm lays down shop hope

A BETTING shop could be opened in Dudley's High Street under proposals submitted by Coral Racing for a change of use for a former discount shop.

The firm is also seeking permission to install air conditioning units and satellite dishes on the property. Dudley Council will make a decision in the next three months.

Shoebox gifts

STUDENTS at Halesowen College have collected donations to put in 40 shoeboxes to send to soldiers in Afghanistan.

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NEWS

Music man is scent wild by perfume girl's voice



SHE'S usually seen behind a perfume counter at the Merry Hill Centre – but Beth Sherburn is on her way to stardom after a record producer overheard her singing at work.

The 21-year-old was at work in Debenhams when she was singing along to a Michael Bublé's Christmas classic.

Little did she know that music producer John McLaughlin, behind such acts as Busted, Girls Aloud and Take That, was shopping nearby buying scent for his wife.

He approached her to compliment her on her voice during the trip on November 28, and promptly invited her to work alongside him in his studio.

The 21-year-old from Sedgley has now signed a contract with Purple Circle Records and is set to release a cover of Ordinary World by Duran Duran, her first single, this month.

Chance

Beth, who stayed in her job until Christmas, said the record contract and meeting John McLaughlin is a "dream come true".

"He was just rushing in to get his wife a present so I was very lucky to be in the right place at the right time," she said.

"I am always singing at work – I sing all the time my friends and family can't stop me."

John said: "It was a little miracle as I discovered Beth by chance when I was in Debenhams at Merry Hill.

"I rushed in having stayed



over after a meeting and I wanted to get something for my wife when I heard this girl singing to herself."

He added: "She stopped me in my tracks. I thought she had the most incredible voice. I knew there and then I had to get her into the studio to test out that voice and see if she had real talent."

Beth performed at Birmingham Repertory Theatre with Matthew Kelly and George Costigan in Don Quixote when she was 14. She also sang in a gospel choir with Katherine Jenkins at The Royal Albert Hall.

She's also a talented musician, and plays saxophone, clarinet, guitar and piano.

Beth has since collaborated with songwriter Jud Mahoney, who has worked with some of the world's leading artists.

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LETTERS

Show a little more tolerance

IN response to Mrs Vicki Starkey's (Roper Way, Woodsetton) envious views directed, I am sure, towards only a few motorised "Formula 1" mobility scooters.

Perhaps she should get her own exercise routine instead of joining those lucky enough to be unable to walk.

Thankfully there are only a few people who display great dexterity in avoiding and disregarding invalids by using a mobile phone whilst walking blindly forward and leaping over a stationary mobility scooter, or even try stretching exercises reaching over

"invisible" invalids trying themselves to reach goods from shelves whilst shopping.

Now a real test of skill, and multi-tasking, try pushing a shopping trolley in one direction whilst looking in another and failing to stop. No problem, trolley pushers have trolley insurance to pay for the damage don't they?

Thankfully lorry drivers do carry insurance but have no need to use it, as in the main, they are courteous enough and aware of problems around them unlike, I stress, a very few mindless pedestrians.

Your comments are directed towards perhaps a couple of incidents and should be reflected in your letter rather than upset the many caring users of mobility scooters. Luckily I am fit enough to walk many miles a day usually looking where I am going and, like the majority of caring people, ready to help those who need help.

You, naturally, are not categorised in the mindless few.

Oh, and a Merry Christmas.
BRIAN HAYNES
Wombourne Close
Sedgley

Issues that are bigger than gay marriages

DAVID Cameron Seems more concerned about gay couples marrying than that this country is in.

He is borrowing billions on top of the billions we are paying interest on and squandering it in aid to countries run by despots whose only rule is by fear.

Then there is this new home for the parasite Qatada who should be in Jordan now, a £400,000 home was not big enough for him.

Dave the marriages you worry so much about will last a hell of a lot longer than yours and Clegg's did.

In a recent letter the question was asked if there were any honest people out there to manage this country in a more robust manner for we in England I think the UKIP just might be that party. Brussels and the laws of the EU have ruled our lives long enough.

J PERKINS
Dudley

LETTERS to the Editor**POST**

Dudley Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES

E-MAIL

Dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Brilliant production

I HAD the privilege of attending the Dormston School, Sedgley, on Tuesday, December 11, and was entertained with music, drama and some excellent poems and verse, spoken by the teaching staff, it was brilliant.

The whole show must have taken so much effort by the staff and boys and girls who performed, such dedication. We hear so much adverse comments about young people today, and it is very refreshing to see these young ones put on such a special effort. My granddaughter Courtney took park, which made me very proud.

Thank you everyone concerned.

B PAYTON, Woodcross Lane, Coseley

Thank you for kindness

I WOULD like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who helped when my husband was taken ill at B and M Brierley Hill on December 22. We were overwhelmed with offers of help and support. Unfortunately, we do not have anyone's name. However, starting with the gentleman who stopped his car to help, to the various members of B and M staff, customers including the lady who called the ambulance to the technicians who checked my husband over and gave him a clean bill of health, we say a heartfelt thank you.

MRS J NAGINGTON
Blenheim Road, Kingwinford

We don't need the new chiefs for police

I DIDN'T vote for the police commissioner so some might say if you don't vote you can't moan.

Well I'm British and it's my God given right to moan as far as I'm concerned and if the vote had been for whether we wanted a commissioner I'd have been the first at the polling station voting No.

Bob Jones is saying there's no money for officers, there's even less now he's appointed himself an assistant on a grossly over-inflated salary.

This has been a total farce and as usual it's the frontline officers who suffer while the fat cat bureaucrats get the high wage and the workers just have to get on with it. I understand cuts need to be made as Britain spent itself silly under the last Labour government but the Tory cuts are running too deep.

JOHN WHITTENS
Dudley

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NEWS**NEWS |
in brief**

A rocking party for Rockies club
A GROUP of disabled young people from Dudley celebrated the 15th anniversary of its youth club with a festive party.

More than 40 members of Rockies Youth Club enjoyed the event at Russells Hall Neighbourhood Centre. A magician, balloon modelling and henna art were among the activities. Club staff also combined the party with festive fun and Santa's grotto and the young people provided a short play, singing, dancing and speeches.

For details about how to join the club email sajid.rehman@dudley.gov.uk or call 01384 813937 or 07799 070630.

Training centre for security firm

A SECURITY firm has invested £1 million in creating a training centre and improved facilities at its base in Cradley Heath.

The centre at Cougar Monitoring's headquarters, Sapcote Trading Centre, Powke Lane, is being used for both internal and external training for both suppliers and customers. Cougar, which has 70 employees, supplies security monitoring services.

Director Darren Hill said: "Our new innovative site facilities will ensure that our staff get the very best training available."

Plan for car park

PLANS for a 24-space car park for factories workers at Gibbons Industrial Estate, Dudley Road, Kingswinford, have been lodged with Dudley Council.

Vandalism forces church to close its graveyard at night

A CHURCHYARD that was targeted by vandals will now close overnight in a bid to prevent another attack in future.

More than £14,000 damage was caused to the burial ground at St John the Evangelist Church, in Brockmoor, Brierley Hill.

Yobs destroyed three headstones and crosses on plots in the 19th century churchyard.

The vandalism was carried out in a late-night attack in September.

St John's vicar, the Rev Steve Martin, said the church had been forced to close the burial ground to protect remaining graves.

The churchyard, off Brockmoor High Street, will be shut off between 7pm and 9am each day. Previously people had been able to use the churchyard as a walkway through to the high street shopping area.

Mr Martin said: "Anything that restricts people's freedoms to a public space is unfortunate but in the circumstances we have had no choice."

People in the community have taken this damage to their hearts."

He said the church sought the views of neighbourhood police officers before coming to the decision.

Any people found inside the churchyard during the night and not on official business will be reported.

Mr Martin has asked residents and passers-by to remain vigilant.

The big breakfast club

A NETWORKING event started as a small gathering of firms has marked its seventh anniversary. Stourbridge Breakfast Club is hosted by QualitySolicitors Talbots at Hagley Hall. Organiser James Gwilliams said: "We regularly see over 100 people." Monthly meetings are on the second Wednesday at 7.45am. For details or to attend on January 16 call Emma Rose on 01384 445 850 or email EmmaRose@talbotslaw.co.uk

Generous gestures give hospital goodwill



Staff nurse Jennifer Halford, left, and Rebecca Cottingham with, back from left, Joanne Weston and Stacey Tyler-Crisp

RUSSELLS Hall Hospital has been filled with festive cheer this Christmas thanks to some very generous donations.

Members of Dudley Bliss Group, which helps families of premature babies, dropped off presents for children and their parents.

The families of premature babies were given gift bags which included knitted baby cardigans and hats, chocolates, bibs, feeding bowls and spoons.

The gifts have been bought, donated and made by the group, as well as businesses including the new Kiddicare Store in Merry

Hill. Joanne Weston, from Stourbridge, who helped start the group in 2009, said: "It is an isolating and frightening experience having a baby in neonatal. When our son Huw was in neonatal for his first Christmas six years ago, we were almost unaware of the festivities taking place around us. Receiving gifts on the unit brought a little cheer to the day."

Fitness fundraisers are asking families to give up unwanted Christmas gifts to help the hospital. Toys, games and chocolates can be donated to staff at Energie Fitness



Hospital fundraising co-ordinator Karen Phillips and personal trainer Angela Willington at the gifts collection launch

for Women gym, Old Park Road, Dudley.

It will offer them two weeks' free membership to help their new year resolutions. Once all the gifts are collected, they will be donated to a prize draw to be organised by hospital staff. The project started on Wednesday.

Owner Bal Dhillon said: "We wanted to tap into the enthusiasm for people wanting to get fit as their new year resolution by also helping bring in gifts for the hospital."

To arrange a gift drop-off, visit www.effw.co.uk/dudley or call 01902 678777.

Raid gets 60 bikes from shop

MORE than 60 bikes worth thousands of pounds were stolen from a Sedgley shop in the run-up to Christmas, police have revealed.

Thieves forced open the shutters at BD Price in High Holborn, Sedgley.

The bikes were for all ages and the majority were still in their boxes, police said.

Sergeant Rob Simpson, who covers Sedgley town centre, said: "BD Price is a very familiar name to everyone in Sedgley as the store has been open for more than 100 years."

"It is shocking to think that someone has so callously raided the business in what should be their busiest week of the year."

He asked people not to be tempted to buy one if offered one for sale but to get in touch with police by calling 101. They include MongOOSE BMXs to Wethepeople mountain bikes.

£87k work for depots

OUTDATED staffrooms and facilities for workers at two council waste depots in Dudley will be given a £87,000 revamp.

Work will be carried out at the Lister Road site to meet health and safety requirements. The facilities, which are said to be in a "poor state", are used by more than 120 workers.

Officials said the Blowers Green site needed a larger "mess facility" for the 52 staff following the introduction of revised working that requires all staff to report back at the depot at around the same time of day.

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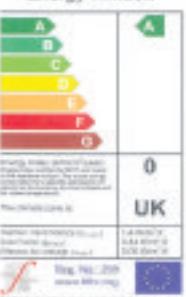
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Suggs to play town

MADNESS singer Suggs will be taking to the stage in Dudley for his one-man show. Tickets are on sale for the gig at Dudley Town Hall on April 19.

The 51-year-old singer, actor, former radio DJ, television and radio personality will use words and music to tell the story of his life.

Fans of his music will also be kept entertained, as the chart-topping singer has promised that there will be a selection of songs scattered throughout the show.

It has already proved a hit with audiences up and down the country. Visit www.dudley.gov.uk

Campaigner's call to close alleyway following fatal attack turned down

AN ALLEYWAY where Shane Watson was attacked and later died will not be closed, despite a campaign by relatives and friends.

Dudley Council made the decision after a police survey found 15 per cent of residents backed the call. Mr Watson, aged 23, was attacked in the alleyway at Springfield Grove, Sedgley, while on his way home from a night out in the town.

He later died of head injuries in hospital.

Mr Watson's cousin Scott Maher-Butler said: "The problem with a survey of the estate is that there will always be people at the top end who use

it and will want it. People at the bottom end know the problems it causes."

"I know the council have cut back the trees, but it could have been so much better - how are they going to stop scooters going up there?"

He said the decision will bring no comfort to the family, who are still grieving.

He added: "Christmas is coming up, his mother is upset, and his dad is doing the best he can."

The council said it was now working closely with police to monitor anti-social behaviour in the area.

Cabinet member Councillor Judy Foster said: "We have worked closely with police partners to

carefully consider this issue before making any decisions following the tragic death of Shane."

"We have listened to the concerns of the family and also consulted local community and local ward members, and feedback from them confirmed that this alleyway is well used by people locally and therefore on balance should remain open."

Last month, James Cartwright, 18, of Sandyfields Road, pleaded guilty to murdering Mr Watson.

Co-defendant Shyloin Wishart, 19, of North Springfield, denies the same charge.

Wishart will go on trial in the new year.



Shane Watson

POLICE investigating a theft from a chemist in Kingswinford have narrowed down a suspect they would like to interview.

Officers had released images of three people in relation to the theft of make-up and perfume at Boots in Market Street.

Following the appeal, police say they have eliminated a man and woman from the investigation.

They now just want to talk to one man. He is described as tall and stocky. He was dressed as a country gentleman, wearing a flat cap, dark green jacket and brown shoes.

New supermarket peeks into skyline



The Tesco Store at the site of the old Crown Centre, in Stourbridge, where steelwork has now gone up

A MULTI-MILLION pound Tesco supermarket has started rising into the Stourbridge town centre skyline.

The steel framework can now be seen on the development site, off the ring road.

It's the first change in the skyline since the rubble left from the demolition of the old Crown Centre and Bell Street car park was cleared.

Contractors have been busy completing the foundations and work on the underground car park.

But now some of the structure of the new store can be seen on the site. Peter Cox, president of Stourbridge Chamber of Trade, said: "It's been going well and they've made good progress. Another few months and we will be able to see it come together. It's going to make a big difference to the site."

Hoardings

Posters advertising the opening of the new store next winter went up on hoardings all around the plot in November. Tesco have previously said they want the store to open in time for Christmas 2013. Work to knock down the old Crown Centre began in March and was completed in May.

The car park was brought down using explosives on April 1. Landmovers cleared 9,000 tons of rubble, some of which will be re-used in the building, ready to construct the shopping complex.

The new supermarket will create 320 jobs and more than 250 people have already expressed an interest in working at the store.

It's part of a £30 million development which will include a new shopping centre and a town square.

Runaway horse ends up in swimming pool

A HORSE plunged into a swimming pool after escaping from its stables at a home near Kidderminster.

The six-year-old horse called Freya was found standing in the circular pool in around 4ft of water.

Fire crews were called to rescue the animal at the home in Cleobury Road between Far Forest and Cleobury Mortimer.

They found the animal could not climb out of the pool without help due to the steepness of the swimming pool walls. Firefighters pumped water out of the pool following the call out on December 17.

Crews said they had to keep the animal calm during the 90 minute rescue. They used straw bales taken from the nearby stable to begin building steps down into the pool.

Once secure, the horse was then led up from the bottom of the pool which had been drained.

Crew Commander Debbie Davies from Hereford and Worcester Fire Service, said: "The horse, called Freya, was a calm horse and certainly could not have climbed out of the pool unaided."

"Freya climbed out of the pool safely and returned to her stable, thankfully she was none the worse for her adventure," she added.

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NEWS

Hundreds of wandering horses taken off streets

MORE than 200 stray horses have been rounded up from the streets of Dudley and Sandwell boroughs after new measures to stop them wandering were introduced.

Both areas have been plagued by the roaming animals causing a nuisance by walking out in front of cars and trampling through gardens. Both councils drew up action plans to tackle the problem.

In Dudley police respond to calls from the public after the council found an ancient by-law giving them the power to remove the animals from roads.

The scheme was originally a six-month trial, launched in April 2011, but has been extended after proving successful. The rescued horses are taken out of the area to be rehomed.

Around 160 had been rounded up during the first year and since then numbers have continued to fall. Police are now being called out to deal with up to four horses a month.

West Midlands Police communications officer Carly Anderson said: "The team are still working with a horse bailiff. There has been a 68 per cent drop in calls about horses. Every single one of the horses taken in has been rehomed."

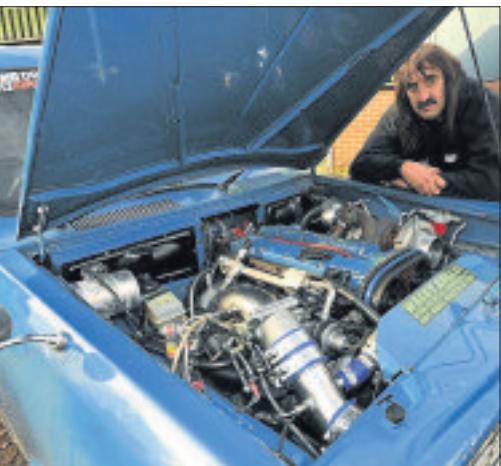
In Sandwell, bailiffs have been employed by the council to seize the stray animals. It followed complaints about roaming horses kicking over bins and chopping up gardens in Tipton. There were also problems on the Wednesbury Oak Estate. But the move has prompted controversy among horse lovers who have threatened legal action after their pets were seized.

Council spokesman Dave Lawley said: "Since the start of the year 20 stray horses have been collected." Other proposals the council has considered include vets being called to sedate horses to make them easier to catch and secure.

Chimney fire warnings

PEOPLE in Worcestershire are being warned to ensure their chimneys are properly cleaned in the wake of a spate of flue fires. The warnings by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service follow callouts to five separate chimney fires in one weekend alone.

Life's no drag with cars



Mick Wilkes was on the project for months with his partner Debbie Smith. A CAR fanatic from Dudley has shipped it over to the States. His partner of 21 years Debbie Smith, 37, helped out with the project, working on the van's bodywork in preparation.

Mick Wilkes, travelled to America to drive 1,400 miles across four states and compete in the Hot Rod Drag Week competition.

The 42-year-old, who runs a car customising company in Brierley Hill called Wacky Racers, is an avid fan of drag racing, and when the opportunity arose to enter his car he jumped at it.

It took him seven months to alter his 1978 Vauxhall HA Bedford van, to be competition ready and then he

had a top speed of 72 miles per hour but Mr Wilkes' modification meant its top speed was more than 160 miles per hour.

Mr Wilkes came 18th in his class and his top drag race was 11.52 seconds. He was one of the 56 out of the 91 competitors who actually completed the competition and was presented with the Spirit of Drag Week award.

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COMMERCIAL FEATURE

Don't be disappointed - choose Choices Windows

The home improvement market is changing and the demand for more choice in colour and suitability of PVC-U doors and windows is growing. Fashionable additions such as orangeries are increasingly desirable, as more people look for ways to improve their home.

Established since 1994, Tipton Windows & Conservatories Ltd, trading as Choices, believes that the latest trends are important, but quality products and exceptional service will always be paramount, which this family run business have proven over nearly two decades.

Situated on Sedgley Road West in Tipton, the founder and company Managing Director Nathan Beddows started the business from scratch at the early age of 19 working out of the very same premises as he does today. He explains his passion:

"I cannot stress enough how much pride we take in every window, door, conservatory, orangery we manufacture and install."

With its roots in manufacturing, the business started more than 19 years ago, and right from the very start an emphasis has been placed on supplying only the finest and most energy-efficient products, but still remaining affordable.

"Our commitment extends beyond the manufacturing process to the design and installation of doors, windows, conservatories and other home improvement services," explains Nathan.

"For some customers we supply new windows and doors, for others we provide a complete home improvement service from building extensions and fitting kitchens, to designing and

installing conservatories and more recently Orangeries," says Nathan.

One tremendously satisfied customer is Rick Houghton. Having being recommended to Choices Windows by colleagues at work he employed them to carry out extensive work at his home, he is keen to share his experiences and commend the team involved.

"Every stage of the process was excellently planned and we received nothing but the best service from start to finish. The tradesmen were outstanding and we were so impressed that we handed over our keys and went on holiday whilst the work was being carried out."

Rick and his family were absolutely thrilled and utterly delighted with the results on their return.

"We are so grateful to Nathan and his team for transforming our home into something we could only have dreamed of," remarked Rick.

Keen to keep ahead in the style stakes, Nathan is ever aware of the latest designs, materials and colours on offer, and strives to make these available to his customers.

"Many people are now opting for stylish coloured PVC-U, influenced by timeless muted 'National Trust' tones. Sage green, gun metal grey and cream are all becoming very fashionable alongside the traditional clean bright white," explains Nathan.

Fitting new PVC-U windows can be a good choice for the environment as well as for your home. Replacing dated double glazing can help save money on heating bills and reduce the carbon footprint of a residence.

"We offer A-rated energy-efficient windows and doors which can help save up to £250 from heating bills in the first year alone. They not only reflect heat back into the house, but also retain heat from solar gain," remarks Nathan.

"As a company we pride ourselves on giving old fashioned value for money and excellent service, we can undertake the majority of jobs and because we manufacture in house at our premises unlike the majority of our local competitors it enables us to have full control so we can manage your project from start to completion ensuring your experience is stress free".

"After many years in the Double glazing business we have seen a lot of competitors come and go, unfortunately leaving many customers without any warranty, after parting with their hard earned cash. Any customer who is considering having any home improvements should choose carefully and do their homework on the company they are considering, ensure if you part with money upfront it is protected by a Fensa approved deposit indemnity scheme, ask to visit previous customers but most importantly don't be fooled by the salesmen's tactics of a tempting 'sign on the night low price offer' that the double glazing industry is notorious for" advises Nathan.

The old sayings are always the best - after a low price is long forgotten, poor quality long remains".

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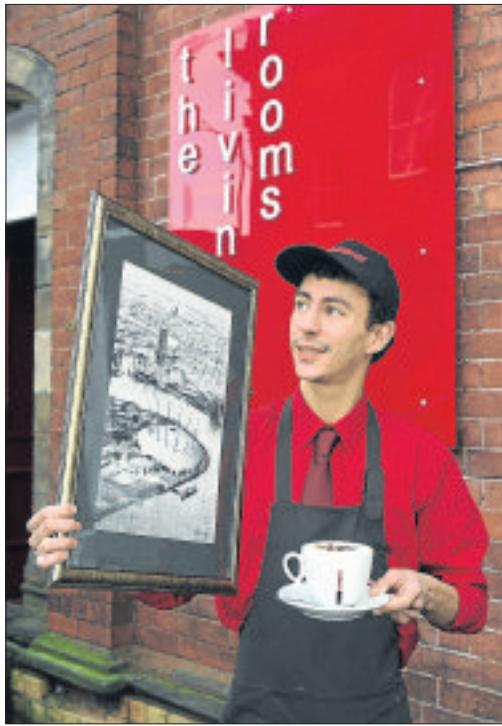
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NEWS

Rescued artwork there to perk up coffee house



Christian Mather of the Living Rooms Coffee Bar, has given artwork from the Kidderminster Library gallery its first permanent home

A COFFEE bar has rescued artwork from Kidderminster Library after plans to close its gallery were approved.

The Living Rooms Coffee Bar, on Exchange Street, has unveiled 17 works by local artists from the Kidderminster Art Society in its foyer, including watercolours, pastels and acrylics.

Manager Christian Mather, who took over the coffee shop two months ago, saw an opportunity to brighten up his premises while giving the art a permanent home in the town.

He said: "When I heard that they wanted to save the gallery I offered somewhere for them to have a proper home."

"Artwork is part of our community and deserves to have a home. Until now the Kidderminster Arts Society has not had a permanent presence in town and we hope that it is as beneficial to them as it will be for our decor."

"We want to show that buying from a local store is better value and by working with the community that supports us, we hope to provide a clear link between our customers and the value we place in their purchases," he added.

The art society's chairman, Clive Betts, helped select and arrange the pictures which are a mixture of landscapes and still-life paintings.

Museum staff thank you

MUSEUM staff in Kidderminster are preparing to say a big "thank you" to volunteers who have given up their time and energy to ensure the town's history goes on display.

The Museum of Carpet officially opened in October and now staff want to praise the volunteers who helped prepare displays and historical details. About 60 people are being invited to the museum for a special celebration between 5pm and 8pm on January 24.

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THE WAY I SEE IT

Enormous contribution of Arctic veterans is honoured

MANY people in Dudley will have known Mick Coyle.

He was a great man who did so much to support local charities, his comrades through the SSAFA and the Royal British Legion and to spearhead work to develop Dudley's memorial at Coronation Gardens.

I was proud to count him as a friend.

But Mick's greatest contribution was during the Second World War when he served on the Arctic Convoy.

Between 1941 and 1945 he and his colleagues braved perilous seas, freezing temperatures and a gauntlet of German war planes and u-boats to keep the Soviet Union supplied on the Eastern Front.

The convoys saw the heaviest loss of life for a sea campaign during the war - 3,000 men met their deaths in the icy northern seas.

Churchill described it as "the worst journey in the world" and conditions were so cold that men lost their hands if they touched the surface of ships without gloves.

But astonishingly, the veterans have never received full recognition for their bravery.

After the war they were ignored when it came to awarding a campaign medal, because the Soviet Union had become the new enemy.

For years Mick's widow Phyllis Coyle and others have pressed the Govern-



Dudley North Labour MP Ian Austin takes the stand in our weekly Chronicle column which gives our local representatives the chance to air their views

"Recognition for not just helping to win the war but for winning the right of the rest of us to live in freedom and democracy"

ment to change all that and create a special Arctic medal. I've done what I can by speaking out in Parliament, tabling questions and writing to the Prime Minister.

But Ministry of Defence bureaucrats have always blocked their claims. The official explanation was that the Arctic veterans were covered by the Atlantic Star medal - even though that was for a separate campaign fought 800 miles away.

However, a breakthrough arrived just before Christmas.

The Government announced that the wishes of the veterans will be granted and a special campaign medal will now be created. I was thrilled by the news. It's a huge victory for

Phyllis Coyle's campaign. And for her and everyone involved it's the perfect Christmas present.

The announcement was a huge tribute to the work of her and her colleagues.

Without their efforts the veterans' bravery would have continued to have been overlooked.

Most importantly, it will be recognition at long last for the veterans' enormous contribution, not just to winning the war, but for winning the right of the rest of us to live in freedom and democracy.

There was little to cheer in the Chancellor's Autumn statement, especially for working families on modest incomes.

Six out of 10 of the households affected by his clamp-

down on 'the work shy' are actually in work. I've looked at the figures in detail and in the Black Country a massive 77,000 families - all of them in work - face three years of real terms cuts.

In my constituency over 6,000 families will be hit.

A one-earner family on £20,000 with two children will lose £279 a year from next April - on top of the higher cost of VAT - according to the independent House of Commons library.

To make things worse, from January thousands of families will be worse off as a result of cuts to child benefit. David Cameron, George Osborne and the other multi-millionaires in the Tory Party might not miss the money, but I don't think families who have worked hard to get jobs on £50,000 should lose out when millionaires are getting a tax cut.

The reality is working people are being asked to pick up the tab for George Osborne's economic failure.

They promised they would tackle the debt, but he is borrowing £12 billion more than he planned. How can we be sure that these new forecasts are correct and austerity will start working?

On the same day these changes come into force 8,000 millionaires will receive a tax cut of over £100,000. We shouldn't be giving the richest people in the country a massive tax cut, when millions of families and pensioners are paying more.

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NEWS**Icy wake-up from police**

POLICE in Kidderminster gave a frosty wake-up call to local motorists who had left their vehicles running to clear the ice while they waited in the warmth.

A special operation was launched in the town after a spate of car thefts in North Worcestershire. Four Kidderminster motorists who risked leaving their vehicles running and unattended on driveways while they defrosted got a knock on the door from police.

The police took the keys from the vehicles and handed them safely to the owners, who were inside their homes.

Robbery ruled a factor in death of lorry driver

A CORONER said the stress of Polish lorry driver being robbed of his £250,000 load is likely to have led to his death.

Bogdan Bartczak, aged 57, was dragged on to parkland off Vale Road in Dudley after he collapsed while his lorry was being robbed. He was found dead at 6.50am on November 1, 2010 an inquest was told.

Thieves targeted Mr Bartczak's lorry which contained 227 flat screen TVs – before abandoning it at the Vectra Industrial Estate in Whites Road, West Bromwich. Black Country Coroner Robin Balmain said: "Mr Bartczak's death was due to natural causes likely to have been induced by the stress of the robbery to which he was subjected."

The inquest at Smethwick Coroner's

Court heard from the senior investigating officer, Det Con David Breckenridge. He said: "He had parked his vehicle behind Oldbury Magistrates' Court and the gang had made their way to the scene and identified the lorry as a high value target."

"The circumstances of the taking of the lorry are still a bit hazy. He was bundled into the rear of a vehicle and the lorry was taken in a different direction."

Only six of the TVs were recovered – the rest of the £250,000 haul was never found.

Police have admitted they may never find out the truth about what happened.

A pathology report read by the coroner had noted the Polish man's "severely abnormal heart" and had recorded the likely cause of his death as eschemic heart disease.

Recession hits collections

ALMOST half a million pounds was raised across the region for the Poppy Appeal – but latest figures released by the Royal British Legion reveal the final total is likely to reveal the effect of the recession.

Fundraisers are already predicting there has been a drop on the previous year, which was the appeal's 90th anniversary. The total received by the South Staffordshire branch, which includes most areas of the Black Country, is £447,849, down from £477,891 last year.

In West Bromwich, collections dropped from £8,803 to this year

£5,958, in Cannock it dipped from £11,581 to £7,518, in Walsall it fell from £21,746 to £16,251 and Tipton went from £22,198 to £21,129.

However, in Dudley collections rose from £15,775 to £22,424 from this year's appeal and in Wolverhampton the pot swelled from £9,425 to £12,623.

Gratitude

Dudley fundraiser Malcolm Davies said this year's total was a record amount for the branch.

He said: "All thanks and gratitude must go to the kind people of Dudley and the businesses, shops and schools who were, without doubt, even more generous than usual."

"The collection has nearly tripled

over the past three years at the Dudley branch but we desperately need younger members to continue with this success."

Alison Bates, community fundraiser for South Staffordshire, said the overall dip in collections reflected the hard economic times.

She said: "We are a charity and are bound by what people give us. If people are struggling and have less cash spare we can't do anything about it."

"We are looking over the next four years to increase the people we help from 165,000 to 500,000."

A national event is being held to mark the 70th anniversary of the Dambusters on May 18.

Farewell after four decades

Nursery teacher Dorinda Garner with pupils and staff at Red Hall Primary

A TEACHER who has taught generations of children is bidding farewell after 40 years at the same school.

Dorinda Garner, known as Drin, has dedicated her career to teaching at Red Hall Primary School in Lower Gornal.

The 61-year-old has taught a variety of age groups since she started at the school in 1972. But after teaching nursery children for the past 16 years, Mrs Garner has decided to retire as the school breaks up for Christmas.

Mrs Garner, of The Broadway, Dudley, plans to spend more time with her family including her six-month-old granddaughter Bonnie.

She said: "I feel very blessed to have worked with the children here all these years."

"I'm actually teaching the grandchildren of the children I taught when I first started. I have enjoyed time at the school very much."

Health consultation hits another delay

HEALTH chiefs have further delayed a public consultation on its review of services in Worcestershire.

Residents will now have to wait until next summer to air their views on the controversial review in a three-month consultation. Services across Worcestershire are under scrutiny by bosses who say there is a growing gap between the demand for healthcare and the available funding.

They are predicting a £200 million shortfall in budgets by 2014/15 – resulting in the need for a review. But the plans have sparked controversy from campaigners determined not to lose further services from Kidderminster following the closure of the A&E department in 2000.

The consultation had been due to start imminently but bosses announced these plans had been delayed. The proposals will be finalised this month with the consultation due in the summer.

NHS Worcestershire chief executive, Eamonn Kelly, said: "We are very conscious that people in Worcestershire are looking to us to confirm the detail of the proposals for change and we want to do this as soon as possible."

Path work is promised

PARENTS who have complained about having to take their children along a muddy pathway to reach a recently opened £4 million school at Chaddesley Corbett have been told action is being taken to solve the problem.

The footpath, which follows a farm track and field edge for the majority of its length, provides a pedestrian link from the village to the recently completed Endowed Primary School in Chaddesley Corbett.

Officials with the County Council Countryside Service said some remedial work will be carried out.

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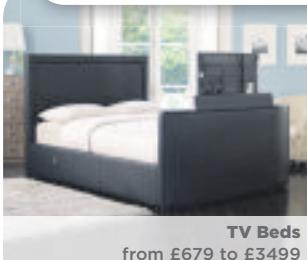


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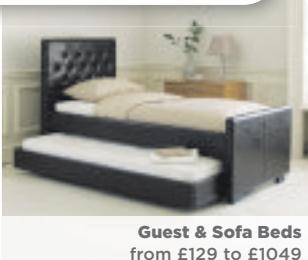
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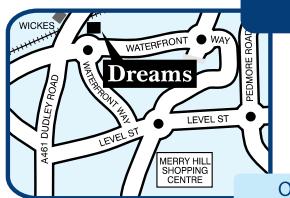
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CLUB NEWS

Choir and soloist in fine voice at service

WEST MIDLANDS FEDERATION OF TOWNSWOMEN

THE West Midlands Federation of Townswomen's Guilds held its annual carol service on December 8 at St Thomas's Church, Stourbridge.

The service was well attended and enjoyed by the congregation.

Chairman Margaret Brookes welcomed invited guests the Lady Mayoress of Dudley, Michelle Mottram and the Federation President Jan Wynn.

Lay minister Hilary Savage led the service and the organist was John Payne.

Wollaston Guild choir and their soloist Ann Tomlinson sang a selection of seasonal hymns and carols. Also 'Les Oiseaux' a local choir from Brierley Hill sang their selection of carols.

The Federation chairman Margaret Brookes thanked everyone for attending and invited them to the Church Hall for tea and mince pies following the service.

We hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas. We would also like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Happy and healthy New Year from everyone within the West Midlands Federation along with our

Cheque handed out to Promise Dreams



Previous chairman Isabel Mason with Amy Johnson, from Promise Dreams

THE club held its Christmas meeting on December 10. Entertainment was provided by club members Sylvia Aston and Isabel Mason who are both trained singers and sang Christmas carols and songs from the shows.

The members were invited to join in and did so with gusto. Another club member Jan Davies gave a humorous Christmas

HIGHGATE LADIES PROBUS CLUB

reading. During the meeting a cheque for £100 was presented to Amy Johnson a representative from Promise Dreams, the chosen charity of last year's chairman Isabel Mason, and which supports sick children.

Members in festive mood

MEMBERS were in festive mood at the December meeting.

Four guests were welcomed and Josie Smith was thanked for providing lovely seasonal floral arrangements.

It emerged that work had begun on building a well for

coming events. Mince pies and mulled wine were then served ahead of the main event.

Catherine Tabener and her accompanist Ian Chamberlain entertained with songs from the shows and some seasonable numbers. Kath Turner gave thanks.

K'FORD TOWNSWOMEN

a family in Cambodia. When completed it will bear a plaque with the guild's name.

Following the necessary business the various sections announced their forth-

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NEWS**Spring start on revamp for zoo**

WORK is due to start in the spring on a major makeover at Dudley Zoo.

The attraction has £1 million to invest in its Castle Hill site to provide a new car park, a new entrance and new roads.

Chief executive Peter Sudcock said: "The new entrance is already off Tipton Road, and we know that the current arrangements are a bit difficult."

"People have to park there and then walk all the way around the front to get here."

Mr Sudcock said the idea and plans were based on feedback from visitors.

"It's a very busy road, and at the moment it's very cold and nasty," he said.

Dug

"It's certainly not ideal for visitors to be queuing there."

The money will also see many of the roads within the zoo's grounds resurfaced.

Mr Sudcock said: "Many of the roads have previously been dug up for drains, and it's a bit of a patch-work."

"Having those resurfaced will make a hell of a difference to everyone."

Much of the money needed for the project will come from the European Regional Development Fund.

It is part of a £4.8 million Castle Hill development scheme to provide a new car park, entrance and facilities for the area north of the zoo.

Bus lane near tourist spots could be axed permanently

A BUS lane near two of the biggest tourist attractions in the West Midlands could be permanently axed. Officials suspended the lane in Tipton Road, Dudley, when construction work started on the £6 million Dudley Archives. The dual carriageway is the main route for thousands of commuters to and from Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton each day.

It is also the only route linking Dudley Zoo, the Black Country Living Museum and the Castlegate retail park.

Councillor Patrick Harley. Campaigners said bus journey times for people wanting to visit the attractions would be affected if the lane was axed.

The council's new trans-

transport chief, Councillor Judy Foster, said: "The bus lane was suspended to improve the capacity of the road during the work to Burnt Tree island, the upgrade to the signals at the junction of Tipton Road and Birmingham New Road and the works to the Castle Hill site access."

"People would be able to have themed weddings in the unique setting of the Hippodrome," said Mr Fitzpatrick, a former lecturer.

"They would add another income for the Hippodrome and we have to look at every way of bringing in money."

Campaigners have visited

West End shows as well as amateur productions.

Spokesman Geoff Fitzpatrick said weddings could be held in the unique setting of the historic stage.

A wedding day package would be offered allowing guests to dine at a restaurant planned for the proposed redevelopment.

"People would be able to have themed weddings in the unique setting of the Hippodrome," said Mr Fitzpatrick, a former lecturer.

"They would add another income for the Hippodrome and we have to look at every way of bringing in money."

Campaigners have visited

the Plaza, Stockport, which was sold off as a theatre in 1965 to become a bingo hall.

But a community trust took over in 2000 and helped reopen the venue following a £3 million fundraising drive.

Public transport pressure group Bus Users UK has previously called into question axing any of the bus lanes in the Tipton Road and Castle Hill area.

It said the roads run freely in off-peak times, suggesting there was not a problem.

But in peak hours the lanes assisted the flow of traffic to ease congestion close to Castlegate island.

Hairdressing tradition continues



Wisteria co-owner Avril Watton, left, with stylist Sharon Tudor launch the salon

A HAIR salon has opened its doors in Wood-setton to continue a hairdressing tradition at the same site spanning for more than five decades.

Wisteria, in Park Road, has opened in the unit formerly occupied by Tracey's, which shut three months ago.

Co-owner Emma Jeavons, who was a

stylist at Tracey's, launched the business with her mother-in-law Avril Watton, from Sedgley.

She said: "We are delighted to see the old faces coming back."

"Listening to demand is important for any business, and we have done just that. We hope to be here for many years."

More to be done as school improves

A SECONDARY school in Stourbridge has been urged to improve further by an education watchdog, despite making recent advances in standards of teaching.

Ridgewood High School, Wollaston, received a satisfactory grade in an Ofsted inspection, which under new rules means it is required to improve. It has been told to further raise the standard of teaching and assessment of pupils' progress.

The report noted there had been improvement since the last inspection a year ago, which also resulted in a satisfactory grade.

Attendance has gone up significantly, teaching improved because of strong leadership and better courses for pupils.

Headteacher Clive Nutting said: "Generally we are encouraged by what we feel was a positive report which has recognised the significant improvements the school has made in recent years."

"We would have liked a good outcome, but the raising of the bar in terms of the achievement is something we can still work towards and I am confident we will reach it by the next inspection."

Mr Nutting, who has been head for seven years, also expressed frustration at the Ofsted four-grade marking system, from outstanding to inadequate.

He said: "Trying to put all schools into four categories is not fair or helpful."

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13

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NEWS**Decision on homes scheme is imminent**

A DECISION on a controversial scheme to build 175 homes in village near Stourbridge will be made next week – after the original outcome was deferred.

Hundreds of residents in Hagley have protested against the plans by Cala Homes.

They have also marched on the home of landowner Lord Cobham to air concerns that the influx of new families would push village services beyond breaking point. Many attended a planning committee meeting on December 3.

But the meeting at Bromsgrove District Council had to be cancelled after a barrister who was acting on behalf of both Clent and Hagley parish councils presented documentation to the committee members.

It claimed that, because the land was earmarked to be removed from the green belt for development, a public forum would need to rule upon whether it was economically, socially and environmentally "sustainable" before any planning application was decided.

Now Bromsgrove District Council will discuss the plans on January 7 and The chairman of Hagley Parish Council has urged residents to turn out to a meeting.

Steve Coeller said: "The objections have been loud and clear – over 1,400 letters of objection and a 4,000-name petition can't all be wrong."

THESE Magnificent Seven super slimmers saw the New Year in as new men.

By swapping fatty foods for fresh fruit and veg the Black Country seven lost more than 40st between them.

Caret and chef **Glen Willetts**, aged 52, of Cradley Heath, lost more than 8st and lost 12ins from his waistline after being referred to a slimming class by his doctor two years ago.

Changes to his lifestyle including switching to skimmed milk, eating plenty of vegetables and healthy breakfasts.

He said: "I feel a lot better, and I love being able to buy more fashionable clothes."

He was tipping the scales at 22st 7lb but now weighs 13st 10lbs.

Swimming

Father-of-seven **Keith Darnley**, aged 52, of Habsbury, Halesowen, had to use a mobility scooter before deciding to lose weight.

But after dropping more than 8st he goes swimming and walking, and took part in the Halesowen Fun Run.

He said he swapped McDonalds breakfasts for cereals with yogurt and fruit or wholemeal toast with mushrooms and tinned tomatoes. He used to weigh 22st 10lb but now weighs 14st 3lb.

Hospitality operations manager **Kevin Herbert**, aged 39, of Quinton, lost 4st after joining Slimming World. He said: "Losing the weight has given me more confidence."

He added: "I am considering a triathlon next year."

He dropped from 20st 11lb to 16st 10lbs.

Steelworker **Chris Heathcock**, aged 42, of Hob Green, Stourbridge lost 4st 2.5lbs. His waistline went from 44 ins to 34. He joined Slimming World in January and

got to his target weight in 11 months by eating more healthily and exercising. He said: "I've even taken up cycling with my daughters Caitlin and Lauren."

Architect **Jonathan Lowe**, aged 31, of Halesowen, lost 5st. He switched from cheese sandwiches

and pastries at lunch, to soups and salads. He went from 19st 12lbs to 14st 12lbs.

Electrical engineer **Adrian Harper**, aged 40, of Lutley, Halesowen, lost 4st 1lb. He said: "I feel like a different person."

He used to weigh 18st 1lb but now weighs 14st.

Kerry Morgan of Slimming World, said: "These men are our Magnificent Seven. We are very proud of their achievements."

Keith Darnley, 52 **Glen Willetts, 52** **Adrian Harper, 40** **Chris Heathcock, 42** **Kevin Herbert, 39**



Jonathan Lowe, Kevin Herbert, Adrian Harper, Glen Willetts, Keith Darnley, David Lacey, and Chris Heathcock have lost 40 stone between them at slimming classes

David Lacey, 60, who lost four stones

Jonathan Lowe, 31, lost five stones

Students box clever with help for school

BUDGING engineers at a Cradley Heath school have created a series of interactive boxes to help pupils at a special school find their way round their building.

The students from Ormiston Forge Academy, Wrights Lane, presented the boxes to Meadows Sport College, Oldbury, at a recent ceremony.

The boxes use literacy symbols to depict a room's function, along with an engraving of the room's name and a button to press to hear it.

Forge students also decided to use the Dudley Road school's colours on the boxes along with an engraved logo.

Meadows principal Gordon Phillips said: "For our students, to be able to find and identify rooms and areas in the school is a learning experience."

"These boxes will have a huge impact on the lives of the children at our school."

Ormiston principal Andrew Burns said: "The opportunity to do something like this with a real life purpose has made a difference to both schools."

"They are now starting to work together to the benefit of both, and we will be doing more."

Forge student Usama Meraj demonstrated the boxes to the group.

She said the boxes would help the students to develop.



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Mon 25th Feb. 19.00-21.00. Both 5 wks. £25.80 #

INTRO TO SIGN LANGUAGE

Mon 25th Feb. 19.00-21.00, 10 wks. £51.60 #

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Tues 19th Feb. 13.30-15.30. Both 6 wks. £43.70 #

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PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS Tues 8th Jan. 13.30-15.30 OR Mon
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Intermediates: Mon 7th Jan. 19.00-21.00, 11 wks. £56.80 #

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From 2 years, nappy facilities available.
Morning and afternoon sessions.
Lunch club available. Good Ofsted report.
Qualified and CRB checked staff.
Tel. 07817 682421

REFLEXOLOGY

Short'N'Sweet Tues 12th Mar. 19.00-21.00.3 wks. £21.90 #

AROMATHERAPY

Short'N'Sweet Tues. 22nd Jan. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

INDIAN HEAD MASSAGE

Short'N'Sweet Tues 12th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

MEDITATION

Short'N'Sweet Thurs 31st Jan. OR Thurs 7th Mar. 19.00-20.30. Both 4 wks. £21.90 #

FITNESS YOGA @ Oakfield

Short'N'Sweet Fri 11th Jan. 11.15-12.30. 5 wks. £26.80 #

FITNESS GLIDING @ Oakfield

Short'N'Sweet Fri 15th Feb 11.15-12.15. 6 wks. £25.90 #

PILATES

Beginners: Thurs 10th Jan 18.00-19.00, 11 wks. £33.35 #

Beg. @ Oakfield: Fri 11th Jan. 10.00-11.00, 10 wks. £36.40 #

Improvers: Tues 8th Jan. 19.00-20.00, 11 wks. £33.35

Improvers: Wed 9th Jan. 18.30-19.30, 11 wks. £33.35

Improvers: Thurs 10th Jan. 19.05-20.05, 11 wks. £33.35

Improvers: Thurs 10th Jan. 20.10-21.10, 11 wks. £33.35

LEGS, BUMS & TUMS

Tues 8th Jan. 20.05-21.05, 11 wks. £33.35

BALLROOM and LATIN AMERICAN DANCING

All classes start Mon.7th Jan. for 11 wks. Beginners 18.30-19.30, £36.10. Improvers/ Intermediates 19.30-20.45, £45.10

ADULT SWIMMING LESSONS

All courses begin Mon 7th Jan. for 11 wks. £33.40.

Beginners: 19.00-19.45. Improvers: 19.45-20.30.

Intermediates: 20.30-21.15

PRIVATE SWIMMING LESSONS

In a group of 2 or 1 to 1. Contact the office for further details

RLSS NATIONAL POOL LIFEGUARD

18th Feb 2013, 8th April 2013, 29th July OR 5th August 2013.
All 8.30-17.00. 6 days. £173.75 plus additional fees £78.75

RLSS NATIONAL RESCUE TEST for SWIMMING

TEACHERS/COACHES 1 day retake; Mon 22nd July 2013 subject to previous qualification and training £36.90, add. fees £26.95. Full course: Tues 23rd July, and Wed 24th July 2013, 8.30-16.00, £57.80, add. fees £26.95.

DUDLEY MBC INDUCTION**TRAINING FOR POOLSIDE ASSISTANTS**

Mon 7th Jan. OR Mon 17th June 2013 Both 9.00-12.00 £18.40

EMERGENCY FIRST AID

Fri. 8th Feb. OR Sat. 23rd Mar. Both 09.00-16.00. 1 day. £36.90

PAEDIATRIC EMERGENCY FIRST AID

Sat 9th Feb. OR Fri. 22nd Mar. Both 09.00-13.00. 1/2 day £24.55

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Tues 29th Jan 19.00-21.00 8 wks. £41.30 #

INTRO. TO TRADING ON THE STOCK MARKET

Mon.21st Jan 19.00-21.00 4 wks £20.70 #

BUYING AND SELLING ON E-BAY

Wed 23rd Jan. 9.30-11.30. Mon 4th Mar. 19.00-21.00 All 4 wks. £29.15. #

COMPUTING for the TERRIFIED

Learn to use a computer from scratch! Day and evening 4 wk courses start Mon 21st Jan. 19.00-21.00 OR Wed. 6th Mar. 9.30-11.30. £29.15. #

AN INTRO TO: FLOWER ARRANGING

Tues 22nd Jan. 14.30-16.30.

FLORISTRY

Tues 12th Feb. 14.30-16.30.

FLORAL CRAFTS

Tues 12th Mar. 14.30-16.30.

All 3 wks. £27.90 Cons. £22.45 and £11 #

LEARN TO SCULPTURE IN STONE

Thurs 7th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 6 wks. £48.50 #

Phone us to add your name to our 'I'm interested list' for:

BEGINNERS GUIDE: APPLE MAC COMPUTERS

Mon 13th May 19.00-20.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

SOCIAL MEDIA: FACEBOOK, TWITTER, SKYPE, YOU TUBE. WHAT'S THE FUSS?

Tues. 7th May 19.00-20.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

COMMUNITY SESSIONS

ADULT SWIMMING: Mon. 11.50-12.35, Tues. 19.00-20.00,
Thurs.19.00-20.15. All £2.60

AQUAFIT: Wed. 12.15-13.00, Fri. 11.50-12.35. £2.60.
Wed.19.00-20.00, Sun. 9.00-10.00. £3.70

FITNESS SWIM Mon. 18.00-18.45. £1.60 for 10-19 yrs olds
Community programme starts 7th Jan No sessions 17th Dec to 6th Jan. More information? 07963 986672, OR 141communitygroup@hotmail.co.uk

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**PLAY THE GUITAR**

A brilliant opportunity for kids (over 8 years old) to learn tunes on electric or acoustic guitar and have fun! Provide your own guitar.

Beginners: Mon 7th Jan. 6 wks.
16.45-17.45 OR 17.45-18.45. £52.50
Intermediates: Thurs 10th Jan.. 17.45-18.45. 11 wks. £48.40

LEARNING4LIFE SWIM SCHOOL

TERM DATES : Mon 7th Jan.-Thurs 28th Mar. 2013 excluding
18th Feb. to Sun 24th Feb. 2012. Mon to Thurs 11 wks. Fri Sat, Sun 10wks

	10 WKS	11 WKS
COST: First Steps, Pre Beg, Beg, Improve.	£41.00	£45.10
Intermediates 1, 2 and 3	£35.50	£39.05
Rookie, W. Skills, L'saving, S & Swim	£44.50	£48.95

We operate 7 days a week and offer sessions at the following standards:

First Steps: An ideal first class for your child. It enables young children from 3 years to enjoy water, develop confidence and preliminary skills with the help of buoyancy aids when needed. Five different 'Stanley' incentive badges award progress towards successful transition into pre-beginners stage and beyond.

Pre-Beginner: Min age 4 1/2 years. Provides familiarisation activities and skills to develop floatation and propulsion without aids up to 5m.

Beginner: Min age 4 1/2 years. Provides skill development to swim 5m on a front stroke and 5m back crawl.

Improver: Improves aquatic skills and stamina to swim 15m on a front stroke and 15m back crawl.

Intermediate 1: Develops confidence in deep water and front crawl breathing action to swim 20 meters on a front stroke and 20m back crawl.

Intermediate 2: Helps to build stamina and endurance to swim 50m on a front stroke and 25m on back crawl.

Intermediate 3: Develops competence on all four strokes (25m) and a front and back stroke for 100m.

Water Skills: To develop survival and rescue skills.

Rookie Lifeguard: Learn new skills, have fun and overcome challenges. Min. age 9 years. Must be able to swim 20 m on a front stroke and 20 m on a back stroke.

Survive & Swim: Min age 11.5 years. Must be able to swim 20m on a front stroke and 20 m on a back stroke. Develops water safety knowledge, first aid, self rescue, survival skills, lifesaving techniques. Can test speed and stamina in a competitive situation. Reg. fee £23.95.

THE SMALL PRINT

January courses May be subject to availability. When you call we will either register your interest. OR if places are available confirm your booking and take payment.

What is Short'N'Sweet?

An introductory taster course of 6 hrs in a small group

Holiday Dates: Learning4Life is closed from Fri 21st Dec. to Sun. 6th Jan. with limited opening from 16th -24th Feb.

This programme is subject to change: particularly if we are unable to recruit minimum class numbers

Funded by

Skills Funding Agency

Where you see this # sign you can claim a 25% reduction on tuition fees if you are in receipt of a state pension and pay a registration fee of £5.00 if you are in receipt of certain benefits.

REDUCED FEES

LIFESTYLE

New line up of celebrities to help live the good life

YOU may still be suffering winter blues or a festive hangover but all keen gardeners know this is now a time to get things started and look ahead to the new growing season.

With this in mind The Edible Garden Show, the UK's award-winning national 'Grow-Your-Own' event, returns in March and is hoping to be bigger and better with a new line-up of celebrity experts.

The show harvests a huge crop of top exhibitors and brings inspirational celebrity chefs and gardeners together under one roof.

Chef Rachel Green will get taste buds tingling with her flamboyant cookery demon-

crops. Alys Fowler and Bob Flowerdew are newly on board for the 2013 show which takes place at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire on 15-17 March 2013.

TV presenter, author and avid gardener Alys will talk of her love of organic food, allotments and money-saving ideas for thrifty growers.

Alys said: "I am excited and delighted to be part of a show that shares my passion for self-sufficiency and organic home-grown produce."

"I've been impressed by the way it brings together, under one roof, everything growing-your-own novices need to kick-start their healthy new lifestyles. And it doesn't have to be expensive. I can't wait to give growers an insight into how to become thrifty gardeners."

Married and living in Birmingham, Alys has an allotment and an urban back garden with two chickens, plenty of veg and enjoys foraging for food and composting.

Anecdotes

Another new celebrity set to share his tips and anecdotes with audiences at the 2013 show is author, gardener, speaker and BBC Gardeners' Question Time panellist Bob Flowerdew.

As the UK's foremost authority on productive gardening, the award-winning personality will entertain and enlighten visitors, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for fruits, vegetables, organic methods and scented plants.

Bob said: "I'm passionate about fruit and veg and really want to inspire other people to grow their own. I think it's a great show. As our gardens are becoming smaller and smaller, I think more and more people will choose plants for their edible varieties.

"In a few years I'm sure we'll have roses with more juicy hips and more fuchsias selected for tastier sweater fruits — they make a very good jelly. I'm sure a really ornamental garden will be seen as an extravagant



Newcomer – Alys Fowler
foible as edible gardens become more popular."

Following on from his success at the show in 2011 and 2012, BBC TV's award-winning presenter and botanist James Wong will be in the Experts Theatre urging visitors to break free of the grow your own "time-warp" and discover incredible edibles far more exciting than anything you would ever think could be grown on our blustery North Atlantic island.

Innovating a light-hearted, dynamic and alternative to conventional spuds and sprouts, James is on a mission to reveal the 99 per cent of weird and wonderful flavours that Brits are missing out on.

He says: "From Szechuan peppers, to edible fuchsia berries, to tiny cucamelons and even home grown green tea, up to 3,000 edible crops can be grown extremely easily in the UK climate. Growing your own can be so much more cutting edge than you might think." Fans of Radio 4's The Archers will get a slice of Ambridge life with the Archers Addicts stand where they can meet actors

Trevor Harrison who plays Eddie Grundy' and Hedi Niklaus aka Kathy Perks, pick up a few Archers goodies and get them signed!

Hedi who also runs Archers Addicts – the official fan club for The Archers – said: "We love coming to shows like this because it puts us in touch with real life Ambridge, and it's a great opportunity to meet our listeners and hear their stories – every bit as interesting as ours."

Scheduled for the beginning of the growing season, The Edible Garden Show is bursting with new ideas, advice and features and has something for all the family from bees, chickens, goats and pigs to plants, seeds, compost, fruit presses, raised beds, tools and gadgets to making growing your own easier.

Show-goers will get a buzz with demonstrations from expert beekeepers on collecting and processing honey and top tips on how to keep the hive healthy, flourishing and free from disease.

Delightful

The British Pig Association is set to showcase native breeds of pigs and entertain families with daily ring demonstrations.

Prospective pig owners can gain invaluable insight into how to keep and breed these delightful animals. For the children, the BPA's Junior Pig Club last year staged their 'Pig Olympics' and it is hoped the fun spectacle will return.

Poultry vet Victoria Roberts will be on hand to share her hen-rearing tips. Victoria, whose passion and talent for rearing poultry began when she was only four, will bring along some of her pure breeds to demonstrate how to handle the birds and check for weight-loss and disease.

Tickets cost £15 (£12 if booked in advance) with concessions for children and seniors. For more information or to buy tickets visit: www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk or telephone 0844 338 8001.



Above: Flamboyant chef – Rachel Green



Left: enthusiastic gardening expert – Bob Flowerdew

Below: Poultry expert – Victoria Roberts



Favourite – TV botanist James Wong

strations, while TV botanist James Wong, BBC Gardeners' World presenter Alys Fowler, Gardeners' Question Time panellist Bob Flowerdew and the event's resident grow-your-own guru Paul Peacock will share their passion of growing and eating home-

24 HOUR HELPLINE CALL 01384 271982



What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. This happens when a blood vessel, known as an artery in the brain becomes blocked (a clot) or bleeds (a brain haemorrhage).

The brain controls everything we do and is divided into many parts with each part having its own job. What you are able to do, or not do after a stroke, depends on the size of the damage and where in the brain the damage has happened.

A Stroke happens suddenly and is a MEDICAL EMERGENCY.

If you or someone you know has the following signs they need to ACT FAST and dial 999

Facial weakness Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

Arm or leg weakness.....

Speech problems, they find it hard to talk, understand, read, or write. Some people may find it harder to eat and drink.

Time to call 999

It is important to remember that NO two strokes are the same. Each stroke is different. Some people may get better quickly, others may take several months, people may carry on getting better slowly for many years.



Why do some people have a stroke?

Some people are more at risk if they have high blood pressure, high levels of fat called cholesterol in their blood, drink too much alcohol, smoke a lot, or have diabetes. BUT people may have or do none of these factors, and still have a stroke. You may hear doctors call a stroke a CVA or Cerebral Vascular Accident.

How can you reduce your risk?

You can reduce your risk of having a stroke by leading a healthy lifestyle. If you smoke, try to stop.

If you drink alcohol - the sensible drinking guidelines per day are, women no more than 2-3 units and 3-4 units for men. One alcohol unit is measured as 10ml or 8g of pure alcohol. This equals one 25ml single measure of whisky (ABV 40%), or a third of a pint of beer (ABV 5-6%) or half a standard (175ml) glass of red wine (ABV 12%).

A local independent charity celebrated its 25th birthday this year by launching its fundraising 25 for 25 appeal.

We provide, advice information and support to people and their families/friends following a stroke through:

- * The provision of information packs - free of charge
- * 24 Hour helpline
- * People to visit - many of our volunteers are people who have themselves suffered a stroke or have experience of some-one who are affected by a stroke
- * Support groups
- * Listening to people's worries and concerns, being a sympathetic ear

Dudley Stroke Association

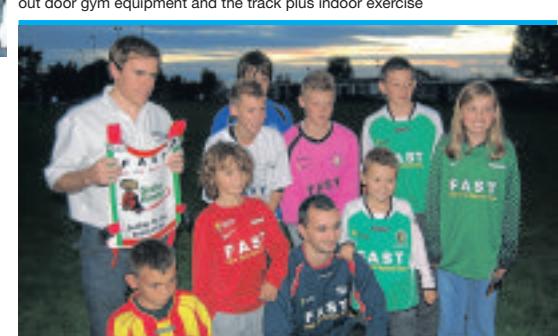
Our Family and Carer Support Worker contacts all people admitted to hospital following a stroke and then following discharge 1 week, 1 month 3 months or as often as required. From Dec 1st we will be carrying out all 6 and 12 month stroke reviews on behalf of NHS Dudley. In believing that **"Life goes on after a Stroke"** we aim to support people in coming to terms with what has happened and to rebuild their lives, attending some of our groups and meeting others may help.

TALKBACK - weekly communication support group for those with speech difficulties following their stroke

Family & Carers Support/ Exercise after stroke groups meet on the 2nd Wednesday and 4th Thursday of each month

Coffee Morning - held every two weeks for people who have suffered a stroke and /or carers meet in a local pub - often staying on for lunch

New Exercise group - the Dell Stadium meets weekly, including using the out door gym equipment and the track plus indoor exercise



Stroke prevention and awareness

NHS Dudley commissioned us to promote the FAST message on sports kits, and take the message into schools and clubs. Can you help spread the message? Contact us for details.

For information on stroke & its effects, and the work we do, contact us on 01384 271982

www.dudleystrokeassociation.org.uk

or email : mail@dudleystrokeassociation.org.uk

Adult Education Classes starting September at, The Dormston Centre, Sedgley Your Friendly venue to Educate your Mind and Body

Mill Bank
Sedgley,
Dudley
DY3 1SN
01384
816389

Enrolling Now!



Open Evening
Wednesday 9th January
6pm ~ 8pm
*Come along & meet the tutors -
Free refreshments available*

ICT - COMPUTERS			DANCING & EXERCISE		
Photoshop Mixed abilities	Monday	7pm – 9pm	Exercise – Gentle Keep Fit	Tuesday	10am – 11.30am
Computers for Senior Citizens Beginners	Tuesday	3.30pm – 5.30pm	Mature Exercise – Gentle Zumba	Tuesday	11.30am – 12.30pm
Computers for Senior Citizens Follow On	Tuesday	1.30pm – 3.30pm	Ballroom & Latin American - Beginners	Tuesday	1pm-3pm
Computers – Beginners Internet	Thursday	7pm – 9pm	Belly Dance – Level 1 & 2	Friday	7.30pm – 9pm
MUSIC			ARTS & CRAFTS		
Guitar – Follow On	Wednesday	7pm – 9pm	Fashion Sewing	Monday	7pm – 9pm
Guitar - Beginners	Thursday	6pm – 7pm	Art – How to Draw and Paint	Monday	10am – 12pm
Guitar – Follow On	Thursday	7pm – 9pm	Art – How to Draw and Paint	Tuesday	7pm – 9pm
LANGUAGES			Art – Modern Art Techniques		
Sign Language – Level 1 Qualification	Monday	7pm – 9pm	Cake Decorating & Sugar Craft Intermediate	Tuesday	7pm – 9pm
Sign Language – Level 2 Qualification	Saturday	9am - 12pm	Cake Decorating & Sugar Craft Beginners	Thursday	7pm – 9pm
Sign Language – Introduction	Monday	7pm – 9pm	Soft Furnishing	Thursday	7pm – 9pm
Deaf Awareness – Certificate	Saturday	9am – 12pm	Jewellery Making – Follow On	Tuesday	7pm – 9pm
Languages – French - Level 1	Thursday	7pm – 9pm	Jewellery Making - Beginners	Wednesday	7pm – 9pm
Languages – Spanish Beginners level 1	Monday	7pm – 9pm	Flower Arranging - Beginners	Monday	7pm – 9pm
Languages – Spanish Beginners level 2	Tuesday	7pm – 9pm	Flower Arranging- Intermediate	Wednesday	7pm – 9pm
WRITING			Stained Glass Making		
Creative Writing	Thursday	7pm – 9pm	Black Country Crafts	Wednesday	7pm – 9pm
MUSIC			BUSINESS & SOCIAL		
Guitar – Follow On	Wednesday	7pm – 9pm	Book Keeping - Introduction	Monday	7pm – 9pm
Guitar - Beginners	Thursday	6pm – 7pm	Minimising Stress and Anxiety	Monday	7pm – 9pm
Guitar – Follow On	Thursday	7pm – 9pm	Stock Market Trading	Wednesday	7pm – 9pm
BEAUTY			Counselling - Introduction		
Nail Art – Shellac	Saturday	10am-12pm	Start Your Own Business	Saturday	9.30am– 11.30am

COURSES AVAILABLE 2013

Take good care this winter



Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group

Advice on health care

Ask a Pharmacist



Pharmacy

Services at pharmacies include:

- dispensing prescriptions and selling medicines only legally available from a pharmacy
- expert confidential advice on treating many health problems
- help in choosing the right over-the-counter medicine
- advice about correct use of medicines
- advice if you are unsure whether you need to see your GP
- collection of repeat prescriptions from your doctor's surgery and delivery of medicines to your home
- emergency contraception ('morning-after' pill) from some pharmacies*
- help in an emergency if you are unable to contact your GP and need prescription medication
- extended opening hours

*Call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 for a list of chemists supplying the 'morning-after' pill without prescription, including to the under 16s.

Call NHS Direct 0845 46 47

Confidential nurse-led telephone helpline available 24hrs, every day of the year. The service includes:

- experienced nurses who can recommend the best course of action if you are anxious about ill health
- health information advisers who have details on a wide range of topics including the opening hours of local pharmacies and GP surgeries and how to get treatment for toothache
- if necessary your call will be passed automatically to the 999 services
- language Line - a confidential telephone interpreting service

Calls to NHS Direct are charged at local rates and for patients' safety all calls are recorded.

NHS Direct: 0845 46 47
textphone: 0845 606 46 47



NHS Online

You can also get health information on the internet by visiting NHS Direct Online at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Minor illness or injury

Walk in Centres



Dudley Walk-in centre for minor illnesses and injuries that do not need hospital treatment are at:

Dudley Borough Walk-in centre, Holly Hall Clinic, Stourbridge Road, Dudley DY1 2ER.
Open 8am - 8pm Mon-Thurs and 8am-10pm Fri-Sun, seven days a week, including Christmas and new year. Tel: 0330 123 9225.

No appointment necessary. Babies under the age of 12 months must be seen by their own GP.

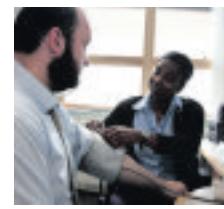
Advice and treatment for complaints including minor cuts, bruises, burns, scalds, insect bites; muscle and joint injuries, back pain, coughs, colds: headache and dizziness; stomach ache, indigestion, constipation, vomiting and diarrhoea; ear, nose and throat problems including minor infections and sore throats; eye problems such as conjunctivitis and sty's; skin complaints including rashes, minor allergic reactions, scabies, head lice and nappy rash; genito-urinary complaints such as urinary infections and thrush and pregnancy testing, advice and referral, 'morning-after' emergency contraception pill and sexual health advice.

Contact your GP or GP out of hours service

GP Surgery

For most medical problems phone your GP practice for advice or to make an appointment. You should expect to see a GP within 48 hours.

GPs visit patients at home only if they decide there is a medical need. If your surgery is closed and you need urgent advice or treatment call NHS Direct or the GP out-of-hours service.



GP out of hours service

GP out-of-hours

If you need help outside normal hours, phone your GP and follow the recorded advice or ring 0300 555 4566.

This service is for medical problems too urgent to wait until your own GP practice is next open.

You will be given advice over the phone and if necessary arrangements will be made for you to be seen.

Serious injury, sudden severe illness or medical emergency

Go to your nearest hospital A&E department



A&E

Only go to a hospital A&E department in the event of an accident or emergency.

An emergency is a critical or life-threatening situation such as:

- unconsciousness
- suspected broken bones
- heavy blood loss
- suspected heart attack
- deep wounds - such as a stab wound
- breathing difficulties
- chest pain
- head injuries

If you are unsure whether a health problem is an emergency needing A&E treatment then call your GP or NHS Direct for advice.

Call 999 for the ambulance service

999 ambulance

Call 999 for an ambulance if the patient:

- has had chest pains for more than 15 minutes
- is not breathing/is having difficulty breathing/is choking
- is unconscious
- is bleeding heavily
- is in severe abdominal pain
- bleeding from the vagina and could be pregnant
- is in the final stages of labour
- may have had a stroke, fit or convulsion
- may have taken an overdose
- has severe burns
- has suspected head or spinal injuries
- has had a severe allergic reaction

Further instructions will be given over the phone by a specially trained call taker and, if appropriate, an ambulance will be sent.



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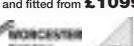
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What's On! Dudley

Take That star rules the Civic

Gary Barlow,
Wolverhampton Civic Hall
THE man behind million-selling love songs and the success of Take That in two centuries had a triumphant sell-out concert in Wolverhampton on Sunday night.

The majority female audience were left more than satisfied as Gary Barlow and his band belted out the hits for two hours. Barlow last played the venue 21 years ago when Take That were on their way to the top. He promised he would not leave it that long for his next Wolverhampton gig, appearing touched by the reaction of an audience he described as "awesome".

Opening with Greatest Day set the bar high but genial Barlow, clad in black suit and tie, surpassed it with ease, stirring the memories of middle aged former teenyboppers with A Million Love Songs and busting Take That dance moves during Pray. "I still got it," he gasped.

A selection of covers included his version of Forever Autumn and a festive Fairytale Of New York with NYC singer and support act Nell Bryden.

The concert hit the heights after an interval with the big Take That hits. The other four were not missed much, even that Robbie fellow. The gig reached a crescendo with The Flood, Patience, Back For Good, Candy, Shine and Rule The World. Gary returned in a spangled jacket for Never Forget. The fans will never forget this gig. **Leon Burakowski**

The West End coming to West Midlands theatres

THIS is the year that the West End comes to the West Midlands with several of the most popular stage shows of recent decades coming to theatres in the region during 2013.

■ by Leon Burakowski

Birmingham Hippodrome leads the way with a trio of blockbusters for the spring, summer and autumn – Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Phantom of the Opera, Disney's The Lion King and the National Theatre's acclaimed production of War Horse.

Hippodrome chief executive Stuart Griffiths said: "Following a huge programme of refurbishment and the complete replacement of our stage, we now look forward to what promises to be the busiest year in our history with three of the biggest theatrical successes of recent times."

Simba

Impresario Cameron Mackintosh's new touring production of The Phantom of the Opera, with Earl Carpenter as the romantic masked anti-hero, is at the theatre from March 13 to May 14.

One of the biggest and brashest shows of the year at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham will be Aussie drag musical Priscilla Queen of the Desert, with Jason Donovan getting back into his high heels to revisit his West End starring role from March 18 to 30.

Musical blockbuster, The Lion King, brings its cast of more than 50 performers

from more than 17 countries when the story of Simba is staged from June 29 to September 28.

Hugely popular play War Horse, based on Michael Morpurgo's First World War-set novel, comes complete with its amazing life-sized puppet horses to the Hurst Street venue from October 17 to November 9.

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre also has an impressive line-up for the new year. Highlights include a revival of Lloyd Webber's spectacular feline musical Cats, including the classic song Memory, from March 19 to 30, and Ghost The Musical from June 3 to 15.

One of the biggest and brashest shows of the year at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham will be Aussie drag musical Priscilla Queen of the Desert, with Jason Donovan getting back into his high heels to revisit his West End starring role from March 18 to 30.



Andile Gumbi as Simba in the London version of Disney's The Lion King, the show with music by Elton John is coming to Birmingham Photo by Johan Persson



Earl Carpenter as The Phantom and Katie Hall as Christine in The Phantom of the Opera UK Tour, coming to Birmingham this spring Photo by Alistair Muir

Brian is king of panto land

Robinson Crusoe & the Caribbean Pirates, Birmingham Hippodrome
BRIAN Conley's early exit from I'm A Celebrity meant he couldn't become King of the Jungle, but he's become King of Panto in Birmingham instead.

Singer, hooper and comedian Conley brings enormous energy to a swashbuckling pantomime that, with a car flying over the audience and a roaring sea monster, must be one of the most spectacular in the UK.

Even suffering a cold, Conley lit up the theatre with his manic mirth and unpredictable antics. After a video prologue set in Brum, Conley started the show with a sight gag that had the audience howling with laughter. He remained in top gear throughout director Michael Harrison's laugh-a-minute production.

There was lots of slapstick. Perky Kathryn Rooney, as pretty Polly, went beyond the call of panto duty when Conley's singing whilst munching an apple saw her pebble-dashed in macerated fruit.

Andrew Ryan was a dame to remember in a dozen different deranged costumes and Lesley Joseph had lots of good lines as the glamorous Enchantress of the Ocean, though she talked rather than sang her songs.

Conley's treasure island antics continue until January 27. **LB**



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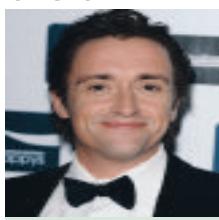
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What's On!

SATURDAY'S TV 5.01.13

CHOICE



Richard Hammond

Richard Hammond's Secret Service BBC1, 6.30pm

Wipeout may be no more, but clearly the Beeb love having Richard Hammond as the face of teatime BBC1. So this week we welcome the Top Gear veteran for a new series which exploits his "secret service" will be on hand to ensure those hilarious japes have us clutching our sides.

BBC1

- 6.00 Breakfast.** **10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live.** 11.30 **Baking Made Easy.** (R) **12.00 BBC News.** **Replay.** **12.15 Football Focus.** **1.00 Live Football:** Great Edinburgh Cross Country. **2.30 Live Darts:** BDO World Championships. **4.30 Final Score.** **5.10 BBC News:** Regional News; Weather. **5.30 Celebrity Mastermind.**
- 6.00 Animal Antics.** New series. Funny clips from the animal kingdom presented by Tim Brooke-Taylor.
- 6.30 Richard Hammond's Secret Service.** New series. Hidden-camera show.
- 7.10 Britain's Brightest.** New series. Clare Balding hosts this search to find Britain's most intelligent individual, in which 24 people complete a series of challenges before one is crowned Britain's Brightest. **8.25 The National Lottery: It's To Win It.** New series. Dale Mortimer presents the quiz in which five contestants pit their wits to scoop a big cash prize. Includes the National Lottery draws with Scott Mills.
- 9.15 Casualty.** Four student nurses try to turn in at the end of their grueling day working in the ED when they are called upon to treat casualties who have been injured in a coach crash.
- 10.05 Mrs Brown's Boys.** Agnes falls under a hypnotist's spell. (R)
- 10.35 BBC News:** Weather; National Lottery Update.
- 10.55 Film:** Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End. (2007) Fantasy adventure sequel, with Johnny Depp.
- 1.30 Weatherview.** 1.35 BBC News.

BBC2

- 6.50 Film:** Sylvia Scarlett. (1935) **8.15 Film:** The Little Minister. (1934) **10.00 A History of Britain by Simon Schama.** **11.30 Meet the Ancestors.** (R) **11.30 Map Man.** (R) **12.30 Indian Food Made Easy.** **12.30 Talking Pictures.** 1.15 **Film:** Of Human Bondage. (1934) **2.35 EastEnders.** (R) **4.00 Great British Food Revival.** **4.30 Live Dart BDO World Championships.** **5.30 The Choice:** A Year with the Military Wives. (R)
- 6.30 Flag Day.** Mark Stacey and Kate Blane examine collectibles in St Albans, Hertfordshire, and presenter Paul Martin discovers the origin of the city's name during a visit to the cathedral. (R)
- 7.30 Dad's Army.** Mainwaring guards some PoWs. (R)
- 8.00 Stanley Baxter: The Many Faces Of.** A profile of the Glaswegian entertainer, whose TV shows drew huge audiences in the 1970s and 80s. With contributions from Michael Grade, Barry Cryer, Bill Oddie and others.
- 9.00 IQ XL.** Stephen Fry is joined by comedians Phil Jupitus, Rich Hall and Jimmy Carr, along with regular panelist Alan Davies on an extended version of the quiz with a difference. (R)
- 9.45 Film:** Cemetery Junction. (2009) A young man in 1970s Reading asks questions what he wants as he starts a new job and is reunited with an old girlfriend. Comedy drama, with Christian Cooke.
- 11.15 Darts:** BDO World Championships. Action from the opening day at the Lakeside Country Club.
- 12.05 Darts Extra.** 2.05 Close.

ITV1

- 6.00 CITV:** Handy Manny. **6.25 The Hive.** (R) **6.35 The Hive.** (R) **6.40 Dino Dan.** (R) **6.55 Dino Dan.** (R) **7.15 Fleabag Monkeyface.** (R) **7.15 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **9.30 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **10.00 Frasier.** (R) **10.30 Frasier.** (R) **11.00 Undercover Boss USA.** (R) **12.00 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **12.30 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **12.55 The Simpsons.** (R) **1.00 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **4.35 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **5.00 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **5.40 Come Dine with Me.** (R)
- 6.10 Channel 4 News.**
- 6.40 4thought.** Members of the public who have made New Year's resolutions and stuck to them talk about their commitment to changing their lives.
- 8.45 Take Me Out.** New series. A pilot from Ayrshire, a Liverpool busser, a London entrepreneur and a surfer from Birmingham try to impress 30 single women. Paddy McGuinness presents.
- 9.45 The Jonathan Ross Show.** New series. Jeremy Piven talks about his new drama Mr Selfridge. David Tennant discusses his role in Spies of Warsaw, and comedianne Sarah Millican is also in the studio.
- 10.45 ITV News:** Weather.
- 11.00 FA Cup Football Highlights.** Matt Smith presents action from the third-round matches, which included Barrow or Macclesfield Town v Cardiff City, Southampton v Chelsea and Peterborough United v Norwich City.
- 12.30 The Store.** 2.30 Pushing Daisies. (R) **3.15 ITV Nightscreen.**

CHANNEL 4

- 6.00 The Treacle People.** (R) **6.10 The Hoobs.** (R) **6.35 The Hoobs.** (R) **7.00 International Volleyball.** **8.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R) **8.15 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **9.30 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **10.00 Frasier.** (R) **10.30 Frasier.** (R) **11.00 Undercover Boss USA.** (R) **12.00 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **12.30 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **12.55 The Simpsons.** (R) **1.00 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **4.35 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **5.00 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **5.40 Come Dine with Me.** (R)
- 6.10 Channel 4 News.**
- 6.40 4thought.** Members of the public who have made New Year's resolutions and stuck to them talk about their commitment to changing their lives.
- 8.45 Is Our Weather Getting Worse?** Investigating the UK's most severe weather events of the past decade, with the use of archive footage, expert insight and computer graphics. (R)
- 7.40 Film:** The Day After
- 8.45 Film:** The Day After
- 9.45 Film:** Inglourious Basterds. (2009) American soldiers on a killing spree in occupied France aid a resistance plot to assassinate Hitler. Tarantino's wartime adventure, with Brad Pitt and Christoph Waltz.
- 10.00 Film:** Hard Eight. (1996) **2.40 Hollyoaks.** 4.45 Smallville. (R) **5.25 Deal or No Deal.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

- 6.00 Milkshake!** **10.00 Power Rangers:** Super Samurai. **10.35 Batman: The Brave and the Bold.** **11.00 The Gadget Show.** (R) **12.15 Celebrity Big Brother.** (R) **12.15 The Gadget Show.** (R) **1.15 Film:** Shattered Heart. (2012) **3.00 Film:** The Dam Busters. (1954) Drama, with Harrison Ford.
- 7.50 5 News Weekend.**
- 7.55 NCIS.** Gibbs discovers a link between the murder of a participant in a kick-up of his team, leading him and new director Leon Vance to unravel the mystery. (R)
- 8.50 NCIS.** A lieutenant apparently commits suicide by jumping from an aircraft carrier and Ziva and McGee are dispatched to inform the widow that he has arrived to find that she has been murdered. (R)
- 9.45 Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the famous housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another.
- 10.45 Shocking Facts About Diet and Exercise.** Countdown of weight-loss methods, with scientists, industry experts and exponents explaining the pros and cons of fat diets, "healthy" foods and extreme exercise regimens.
- 11.45 Forensic Files.** A female killer leaves police few clues to work with. (R)
- 12.15 SuperCasino.** **4.00 Michaela's Wild Challenge.** (R) **4.25 Great Artists.** (R) **4.50 Rough Guide To.** (R) **5.05 Hana's Helpline.** (R) **5.15 The Milkshake! Show.** (R) **5.40 Thomas & Friends.** (R) **5.50 Roary the Racing Car.** (R)

DIGITAL

- BBC Three** **7.00 Merlin.** 7.45 Doctor Who. **8.35 Top Gear.** **9.30 Russell Howard's Good News.** **10.05 Film:** The Prestige (2006)
- BBC Four** **7.00 Lost Land of the Tiger.** **8.00 A History of Art in Three Colours.** **9.00 Queen.** **11.00 The Richest Songs in the World.**
- ITV2** **3.35 Film:** The Mighty Ducks (1992) **5.40 Film:** Peter Pan (1904) **7.50 Film:** Evan Almighty (2007) **9.45 Take Me Out – The Gossip.** **10.35 Fake Reaction.** **11.20 Film:** Couples Retreat (2009)
- ITV3** **3.00 Agatha Christie's Marple.** **5.00 Lewis.** **7.00 Doc Martin.** **9.00 Midsumner Murders.** **11.05 Film:** The Golden Age (2007)
- ITV4** **3.15 Film:** The Way West (1967) **5.40 Film:** The Big Country (1958) **6.00 Film:** Harry Potter (1993) Action thriller, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme. **11.00 Film:** GoodFellas (1990)
- E4** **2.30 Film:** Charlotte's Web (2006) **4.30 How I Met Your Mother.** **7.30 The Big Bang Theory.** **7.30 How I Met Your Mother.** **8.00 Rules of Engagement.** **9.00 Film:** Role Models (2008) **11.00 The 50 Funniest Moments of 2012**
- Film4** **3.10 Fantastic Mr. Fox.** (2009) **4.35 Hairspasm.** (2007) **7.15 Zoolander.** (2001) **9.00 Knowing.** (2009) An astrophysicist decodes a page of numbers revealing the dates of a series of disasters and tries to prevent them happening. Mystery thriller, starring Nicolas Cage and Rose Byrne. **11.20 The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning.** (2006)

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Zumba 7.15pm - 8.15pm	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Kingswinford School	Wardsley	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Darkhouse	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 7.45pm - 8.30pm	Zumba 8.00pm - 9.00pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Hagley Primary School	Zumba 11.15am - 12.00pm	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 8.30pm - 9.30pm	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Zumbatronics 9.30am	Zumba 11.15am - 12.00pm	High Arcal
Zumba 9.30pm - 10.30pm	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Lil Starz (4-7 yrs) & 10.15 Big Starz (8-12)	Zumba 9.30am - 10.30am	Leisurele Fitness
Pilates 9.45am - 10.45am	Zumba 8.00pm - 9.00pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Kingwindorf School	Zumba 9.30am - 10.30am	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Zumbatronics 9.30am	Zumba 11.15am - 12.00pm	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 6.30pm - 7.30pm	Lil Starz (4-7 yrs) & 10.15 Big Starz (8-12)	Zumba 9.30am - 10.30am	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 7.45pm - 8.45pm	Kingwindorf School	Zumba 11.15am - 12.00pm	Leisurele Fitness
Zumba 8.30pm - 9.30pm	Zumba 8.30pm - 9.30pm	Leisurele Fitness	Zumba 8.30pm - 9.30pm	Zumbatronics 9.30am	Zumba 11.15am - 12.00pm	Leisurele Fitness

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What's On!

Film Choices

MONDAY

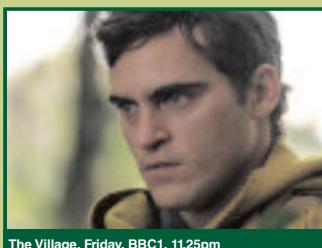
The Perfect Teacher, Channel 5, 3.10pm
A spoiled, selfish teenager becomes infatuated with her teacher. She befriends his daughter as a way of warming her way into the family and sets about manipulating every aspect of his life, including driving away his girlfriend. As her mind games continue, her obsession leads her to murder. Thriller, starring Megan Park and David Charvet. (2010)

TUESDAY
Mickey Blue Eyes, ITV1, 10.35pm

A strait-laced Englishman falls for a New York mobster's daughter, who wants to escape her family's criminal connections. However, try as he may, he realises there is virtually no way to avoid being drawn into the family's illegal shenanigans. Romantic comedy, starring Hugh Grant, Jeanne Tripplehorn, James Caan and Burt Young. (1999)

The Rebound, BBC1, 11.25pm

A New York mother starts a new life in suburbia after leaving her unfaithful husband. She befriends a younger man who is still getting over being abandoned by his wife. Romance soon blossoms, but neither is sure if they are just trying to recover from their recent failed relationships. Romantic comedy, with Catherine Zeta-Jones and Justin Bartha. (2009)



The Village, Friday, BBC1, 11.25pm

WEDNESDAY
When a Stranger Calls, Channel 5, 11.30pm

A teenager babysitting for a family living in a remote lakeside house is terrorised by mysterious threatening phone calls. She soon discovers the caller is ringing from inside the house and realises her and the children's lives are in danger. Horror, with Camilla Belle, Katie Cassidy and Tessa Thompson. (2006)

THURSDAY
Vivacious Lady, BBC2, 8.50am

A professor falls in love with a brash nightclub singer while on a trip to New York, and impulsively marries her. However, he is afraid his conservative family will not approve of his new wife, so tries to keep the relationship a secret from them. Romantic comedy, with Ginger Rogers and James Stewart. (1938)

FRIDAY
The Village, BBC1, 11.25pm

The peaceful rustic existence of villagers living a seemingly idyllic life in a remote 19th-century settlement comes under threat when an age-old curse with the creatures of the forest is broken by a headstrong young man. M Night Shyamalan's horror thriller, starring Joaquin Phoenix and Bryce Dallas Howard. (2004)

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Pick of the Week

Dynamic duo's series is out of this world

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Okay, we admit it. Those are the lyrics to The Big Bang Theory, but if you want to know more about life, the universe and everything, then Dara O Briain and Brian Cox have just the show for you.

Since 2011, their week-long strand Stargazing Live has been a firm annual fixture in January, a time when the other terrestrial channels seem obsessed with shows about diets and alleged celebrities co-habiting in a camera-strewn pre-fab.

They kick things off their exploration of the night skies with search for evidence of life on Mars, and ask viewers for help to explore an uncharted area of the red planet's surface.

Plus, Liz Bonnin reports live from NASA mission control to find out the latest findings of the Curiosity Rover, and Mark Thompson offers tips on how to observe the moons of Jupiter.

Those with a long memory may recall Heavens Above, a short-lived kids' ITV show from the 1980s in which Dr Heather Couper proved that reaching for the stars (while most of us were in the gutter) was just as much fun as playing asteroids on their Atari game system.

The Mock the Week veteran and the much imitated professor might be an unlikely double act, but their mix of jargon and banter has proved to be a great way to enjoy a week of programming.

For decades of course The Sky At Night was the doyen of all astronomy shows, a BBC1 staple which was usually screened when most of us were tucked up in bed.

Hosted by the much-missed Patrick Moore, TSAN made history as the longest-running TV show hosted by the same presenter.

From 1957, the acclaimed Knight inspired millions, including Queen guitarist Brian May, and Messrs O Briain and Cox.

Alas, astronomy series on other channels is rarely even an issue these days.

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So thank heavens Brian made the universe sexy again with his assorted BBC shows, Wonders of the Universe and Wonders of the Solar System.

We have no idea what his pending series Wonders of Life will be like, but we're sure his mix of science history and wit will give genre legend David Attenborough a run for his money.

Brian's star, if you'll excuse the pun, has been on the rise for years now, and it helps that he's such a good all rounder, whether fronting impressive strands such as this, or Radio 4's Infinite Monkey Cage, with Robin Ince.

It's little wonder Danny Boyle chose him as technical adviser for his sci-fi epic Sunshine a few years ago.

Coming back to Earth with a bump, here Brian and Dara shed more light on the universe, and if that's not enough astronomical entertainment for you, stay tuned for spin-off show Back to Earth, which is broadcast immediately afterwards.



Brian Cox and Dara O Briain host Stargazing Live, Tuesday, BBC2, 8pm

Best of the Rest

MONDAY
Miranda
BBC1, 9pm

The image Miranda projects is that of an overgrown child – but the latest episode sees her trying to prove she can behave as an adult. It's a task that is easier said than done... Miranda thinks that everyone will be convinced of her new, grown-up approach to life if she can successfully take care of a toddler and host a dinner party for eight people. Unfortunately, the youngster inside her can't resist a soft play area, so instead of encouraging the toddler to climb on the obstacles, she ends up stuck inside a kids' tunnel. And as for the dinner party... well, you can probably imagine the chaos that ensues there...

TUESDAY
The Undateables
Channel 4, 9pm

Being a small fish in the huge pool that is the dating game can be stressful enough at the best of times (men are from Mars and all that), but the individuals featured in this series have to contend with extra pressures – they're disabled. When the show first aired last year, many of us dared only look through squinted eyes at a programme that sounded as though it would poke fun at those less fortunate. What we were faced with, though, was a heartwarming series that highlighted that, everybody has the right to love and be loved. In this instalment, we meet 26-year-old Michael, whose autism means he struggles to hold down a conversation, let alone

a date.
Death in Paradise
BBC1, 9pm

We're rather pleased to see this crime drama is back for a new run – not least because its depictions of hot weather should warm up our wintry nights. Ben Miller returns as policeman Richard Poole who, along with his team, must discover who has lethally wedged a machete into the back of former sugar plantation owner Roger Seymour. There is no shortage in suspects – Seymour doesn't seem to have been that popular a guy – but picking the right one proves almost impossible, especially when the island's festival of love begins to distract Richard... Sara Martins also stars, alongside guests James Cosmo, Tom Ward and Stephanie Beacham.

WEDNESDAY
Africa
BBC1, 9pm

You've got to hand it to the BBC – their natural history unit is absolutely second to none. That's thanks largely to David Attenborough's influence, both as presenter and former director of programmes. Now, even at the age of 86, he's still the best in his field, and he proves it with this magnificent series. In this second episode, he and the rest of the Africa team visit the rocky outcrops of the Serengeti, in Tanzania, to bring us some remarkable and striking

images. They include a daring lizard risking its life to eat the flies from a lion's face, and footage of one of the most unusual birds extant – the four-foot-tall shoebill – demonstrating its nesting habits.

THURSDAY
Silent Witness
BBC1, 9pm

Another year, another series of Silent Witness. Stepping into Tom Ward's shoes is David Caves as Jack Hodgson, one of the youngest people in the UK in his field. He faces a baptism of fire in his first case alongside Nikki and Leo who involves the death of wealthy, ageing confectionary company owner John Briggs. DI Gold thinks he died of natural causes, but Nikki and Jack aren't so sure.

In-fighting among Briggs' family, staff and potential business investors makes finding out whodunit all the more difficult – until the appearance of a new corpse helps to shed some light on the murky matter. Series regulars Emilia Fox and William Gaminara also star, alongside guests Sharon Small, Tim Pigott-Smith and Louis Emerick.

The Undateables, Tuesday, Channel 4, 9pm

FRIDAY
16 Kids and Counting
Channel 4, 9pm

Sue Radford is the matriarch of Britain's biggest family living under one roof, and having 15 of them already, she is now awaiting number 16. Eldest daughter Sophie, 18, could help out, but her first baby is due a month earlier. Given their ever-increasing numbers, a road trip to France could be seen as less of a family outing and more of an invasion, but that's on the cards as Sophie and boyfriend Joe come to terms with becoming first-time parents, while Sue and Noel get used to the idea of their new status as grandparents. Here cameras offer us a glimpse of the laughter, tears and general chaos at the Radfords.

The Graham Norton Show
BBC1, 10.35pm

Graham Norton is like a pair of old slippers. That's not to say he's got a faint whiff of something rather unpleasant and is well-worn; more that he's a comfortable fit and you just wouldn't be without him. Graham's audience knows exactly what it's going to get with him – clean, executable fun that won't have telly bosses falling over themselves to reach for the 'censor' button. The fella simply has it. Whatever 'it' may be, there aren't many talk-show hosts like him. The man's got the gift of the gab, we'll give him that. And tonight, he's rubbing shoulders with the big guns, inviting only the coolest director in the world, Quentin Tarantino, on the show for a chinwag.

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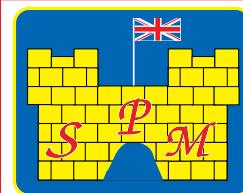
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HOMES

Precautions can help to minimise flood damage

WITH the Midlands hit by flooding, and heavy rain still a threat across much of the UK, Lloyds TSB Insurance is offering advice for homeowners to minimise damage to property and homes.

Tim Downes, Regional Manager, Personal Claims Consultants, said: We are advising homeowners who are at risk to take steps now to reduce the risk of damage to their homes, and to monitor local news and weather updates."

According to Lloyds TSB claims data, flood damage causes an average of £17,000 worth of damage per incident, so taking steps now is essential to avoid issues later!

If your home is at risk of flooding:

- Place sandbags outside doors, air-bricks, windows and any other holes to reduce the amount of water entering your property
- Turn off the mains supplies of water, gas and electricity
- Unplug all electrical items, and store them as high as possible
- Disconnect pipes to washing machine and dishwashers to avoid damage if appliances move during the flood
- Move as much furniture as possible upstairs, weigh down large items that can't be lifted with sandbags so they don't move and cause damage
- Empty contents of cupboards and drawers, and store as high as possible
- Move rugs and curtains upstairs or to higher ground
- Keep your home insurer's policy details and telephone numbers to hand in case you need to make a claim
- Remember to move sentimental items such as photographs albums to a safe place, as they cannot be replaced.
- Ensure mains supplies of water,



Bewdley and Stourport have been hit by flooding from the River Severn



electricity and gas have been checked for damage by a qualified engineer before reconnecting

● Dry out appliances that have been affected by water and ensure a qualified electrician or Gas Safe registered engineer inspects them before use

- Open doors and windows to ventilate and dry out the property. Ensure the home has completely dried before attempting redecorating work
- Contact your insurer and report any damage caused to buildings and/or contents as soon as possible
- Take photographs of damaged

items as it may help your insurer to settle a claim

● Keep any ruined property as insurers may want to inspect it.

- Keep a home emergency kit prepared in case of a winter emergency such as a flood or severe storm.
- Listen to the radio for regular updates on the weather or other emergency situations.

Householders who are concerned their homes may be at risk of flooding can register for Environment Agency Floodline Warnings Direct by calling 0845 988 1188.

Simple questions to warm things up

TENANTS looking to avoid feeling the chill in a newly rented property this winter can find a warmer place to live with a few simple questions, according to the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA).

Ian Potter, Managing Director, ARLA said, "Utility bills are a key consideration for most tenants, especially during the colder winter months.

There are many well-insulated private rental sector properties available, but there are others which may require tenants to use their own common sense to reduce bills."

ARLA has the following tips to help tenants identify key features:

1. Ask about insulation:

When viewing a property, be sure to find out what kind of insulation is installed and how recently it was put in. While factors like loft insulation may not be immediately visible, they can make a huge difference to a property's heat retention.

A lack of snow or frost on a property's roof during a cold snap can be a good indicator that a lot of heat is being lost through poor insulation.

2. Look at a copy of the EPC:

An energy performance certificate (EPC) should be available for prospective tenants' consideration as part of the viewing process. This can give a good indication of how energy efficient a property is. The closer to 'A', the more likely it is to hold in heat and register lower utility bills.

3. Don't forget the boiler:

A new boiler can make a significant difference to heating bills; therefore it is always worth asking when the model was installed.

This can also be a factor if there are multiple showers in the property, which can be a drain on hot water levels. All boilers should be regularly serviced by a certified gas fitter, and be sure to check the legally required documentation before signing any tenancy agreement. If the boiler has



Every new tenant should ask questions about the heating and insulation

not been checked recently, ask the landlord to agree to a check-up before you move in.

4. Paying the bills:

While many landlords will state that electricity and gas suppliers should not be changed in the tenancy agreement, it is always a good idea to check. If they do allow you to change supplier, it is always possible that you could find a cheaper deal, meaning there is less pressure to use the heating sparingly.

5. Double glazing and curtains:

Many properties lose heat through windows, so always check the glazing in each room. Single glazing or larger windows can often make rooms colder, and this should be a key consideration for winter months.

Curtains can be one solution to this problem.

For added warmth, be sure to ask the landlord or letting agent if they are happy for you to put up curtains if they are not already fitted.

Bond fever shakes up the price of Aston DB5



Best of British – the 1964 Aston Martin DB5 which made top price at the sale

THE usual huge crowd flocked to Brightwells to see over 100 classic cars and motorcycles come under the hammer.

Undeterred by difficult travelling conditions and widespread flooding in the run-up to the sale, bidding was keen for many lots and by the end of the day over 70 vehicles had found new homes in a sale which grossed almost £900,000.

Given all the hype surrounding the 50th anniversary of the James Bond films and the recent 'Skyfall' premiere, it was perhaps no surprise that a silver Aston Martin DB5 topped the results table.

A 1964 model that had been partially stripped out and race prepared by the

late Peter Wheeler of TVR fame, the Aston soared way beyond its estimate before going to an American bidder for £184,800.

Also hotly contested was a beautifully presented 1937 Alvis Speed 25 SB Charlesworth Saloon that was finally secured by a German collector for £71,600 (some £15,000 above forecast).

However, perhaps the most surprising

result of all was the price paid for a rather crudely made 1932 Riley Nine Special that had been languishing in a Cheshire barn for 30 years. With half-a-dozen phone bidders chasing it, the Riley eventually trebled its estimate before being hammered down to another German bidder for £17,000.

More predictable was the £25,750 paid by a UK buyer for a left-hand drive 1970 Porsche 911T 2.2 which confirms just how desirable these early

911s have become recently, even in basic TR spec as here.

Triumph's TR range of sports cars always have a following and the £13,400 raised by a 1967 TR4A and the £10,500 for a 1972 TR6 were bang on the money for good usable examples. Land Rovers also have many fans and a superbly restored 1966 Series 2A fetched a richly deserved £10,300.

"Overall we were delighted with the results of the sale," said Brightwells' car consultant, James Dennison. "Foreign bidders were much in evidence and good cars are continuing to attract very healthy prices despite the sometimes gloomy news in other areas of the economy. The outlook for next year looks positive and we expect the market for classic cars will remain buoyant."

The next sale is on March 6, 2013



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Drivers are set to lap up awards

RALLY drivers are preparing for their big awards night – and looking forward to this year's events.

The Heart of England rally championship awards night takes place at Hagley Golf Club, Stourbridge tomorrow. And plans are now being made for the official launch of the 2013 championship, on January 26 at the Curborough spring circuit near Lichfield.

The calendar for 2013 has been finalised with organisers looking for an affordable but exciting on-road championship.

Schedule: March 17, AGBO Stages, Weston Park; April 13, Horiba D'Stag Stages, MIRA Motocentre, May 25, Pirelli Stages, Stourbridge; Ampley, June 21-22, Lovell Rally of the Midlands, Hinckley; August 17, Centenary Stages, Barkston Heath; September 29, Patriot Stages, Caerwent; October 26, Fat Albert Stages, Keevill; November 24, Carfax Stages, RAF Benson.

■ Stourbridge's three-time British Touring Car Champion Matt Neal will meet fans and sign autographs at the Autosport International 2013 show at Birmingham's NEC on January 12-13.

Danks goal ends hope for Yeltz

Sutton Coldfield 2 Halesowen 0

A TWO-GOAL deficit at half-time proved too much for Halesowen to come back from as their Boxing Day Northern Premier Division One South fixture ended in disappointment.

It was a slightly fortuitous goal that gave the home side the lead on the 37th minute through Lee Parsons.

He unleashed either a shot or long ball forward from 40 yards that flew over Halesowen goalkeeper Dean Coleman and into the net.

Parsons turned provider on half-time when he passed for former Halesowen striker Mark Danks to apply the finishing touch.

Halesowen fought back in the second half, Jean Michel-Guyes shooting wide and Brendan Kelly seeing his free-kick deflected past the post before Luke Corbett produced a good save from the home keeper.

Yeltz's top scorer Ben Haseley failed to get on the score sheet but did produce a shot on 80 minutes that hit the bar.

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Sunday, February 24, 2013

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Signed.....
Fee paid
(to be signed by parent/guardian if under 18)
Date.....

Take heart for annual run

BLACK COUNTRY keep-fit fans are preparing to run for their hearts.

Action Heart's annual five-mile run takes place this year on Sunday, February 24.

The 23rd Heart Run gets underway at 9.30am, starting and finishing at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley.

The event, supported by Dudley NHS Primary Care Trusts, is enjoyed by all types of people, from serious club runners to joggers and fun-runners.

Many might not tackle the event but for the training schedule provided by the organisers, which will appear in the Chronicle.

An application form is printed, left,



members); £13 (non-club members). There is no entry on the day.

If you have not exercised for some time or are out of condition, see your doctor and get approval.

Training: Week One

Monday: 10 minutes (alternate one min jog/one min walk).

Tuesday: Rest

Wednesday: Five minutes (two min jog/one min walk/two min jog).

Thursday: Rest

Friday: Seven minutes (three min jog/one min walk/three min jog).

Saturday: Rest

Sunday: 10 minutes (jog/walk).

Look out for week two next week.

Shooting ace sets targets for 2013

PARALYMPIAN Ryan Cockbill is back in training after this year's London Games – and has his sights set on a number of achievements for 2013.

The 22-year-old from Great Barr wants to represent Great Britain at the shooting world cup championships in Poland, as well as win gold on home soil and also secure a place at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio.

Cockbill broke his neck in a swimming accident in 2006 which saw him paralysed from the chest down.

Later this month, he will take part in the National Indoor Shooting Centre open competition at Aldersley Leisure Village, Wolverhampton.

The month after he will compete at the British Airgun Championships in Bisley, Surrey. If he does well, he could be selected for the international competition in Poland.

Chosen

Cockbill, who competed in two individual events at this year's Paralympic games and was also chosen to carry the Olympic torch through Birmingham, said: "I've had a bit of a break but I'm back training now."

"I really enjoyed the Paralympics. The atmosphere was unbelievable. It's given me the drive to want to go to Rio."

He trains by himself two or three times a week at Aldersley Leisure Village and also trains with the Great Britain squad in Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury.

Ryan said he was looking forward to his upcoming competitions, adding: "I'm hoping to do as well as the Wolverhampton one as I did this year."

"I won the disabled prone air rifle competition and the Keith Morris challenge trophy. I was second in the British Airgun Championships."

Lindgren safe after heavy fall

WOLVES speedway star Freddie Lindgren has emerged unscathed from a nasty fall in America. He crashed in the Monster Energy Speedway Invitational in Los Angeles.

The Swede reappeared later in the meeting and finished with four points.

Team-mate Ricky Wells was third behind winner Billy Janniro and runner-up Greg Hancock.



Matt Farrington's dive pass gets Dudley Kingswinford moving against the Saxons

Saxons too strong but DK fight on to the end

DUDLEY KINGSWINFORD battled hard throughout against runaway National League Two North champions-elect Stourbridge and can be proud of their efforts against a very good side.

The game – in front of an animated 1,400-plus crowd – was a good one to watch with skilful, open rugby being played throughout by both sides.

Stour have assembled a top-quality squad in an effort to ensure a quick return to the National Division One. Director of rugby Neil Mitchell seems to have the right balance in the side and you would not bet against them going through the season unbeaten.

After a strong start, the visitors gradually took control with three tries in the first 23 minutes but DK dug in and finished the first half strongly.

The home side continued to take the game to Stour and certainly had the lion's share of possession in a stirring second half.

Crucially, they lacked their visitors' clinical, cutting edge and were unable to penetrate a rock-solid defence until the last minute when former Stour winger Duncan Chance scored a superb and well-deserved long-distance try.

There were a few enforced changes for DK; top points scorer and fly-half Gareth Bowen damaged knee ligaments last week and was replaced by Jon Higgins.

DK's back row was hit by the absence of Pete Knight (injury), Jon Tideswell (holiday) and Tom Leach (ban) but Sam Pedley, Joe Carpenter and Josh Biggea did a sterling job on the day.

Young DK prop Jayke Priest made his debut from the bench in the second half and did well.

Stour did most of the pressing, but DK defended

Dudley Kingswinford 7 Stourbridge Saxons 29

Man of the match

THE man of the match awards for both sides were donated by Pete Millard from Stourbridge, in memory of his father Ted who played for both clubs.

Handsome glass plaques were awarded to DK's Duncan Chance and Pete White of Stourbridge.

strongly with Stefan Shillingford outstanding.

The pressure paid off after 13 minutes when Stour's No. 8 Drew Harper was driven over in the corner from a strong rolling maul. Full-back Jamie Hearn nailed a fine touchline conversion for a 7-0 lead.

Four minutes later, DK were caught napping by a quick tap penalty taken by Stour scrum-half Pete White who made 25 metres before setting up another strong forward attack which saw lock Ben Hughes dive over for an unconverted try.

The home line was breached on 23 minutes

when White darted through a gap to score a third try. Hearn converted for 19-0.

To their credit, DK pummelled away in the visitors' half for the last 10 minutes before half-time but could not find a way through.

DK continued in the same vein for the first 15 minutes of the second half, but could not turn it into points.

On 56 minutes an astute kick out of defence saw DK caught horribly short at the back and second row Robbie Hurrell canter in unopposed for a fourth bonus-point try. Hearn's conversion made it 26-0 and a long-range penalty stretched the gap a further three points.

DK had to wait until the final minute to score – and what a score it was!

From the home 22m, scrum-half Matt Farrington kicked a high ball ahead for Chance to chase. He timed his jump perfectly, juggled the ball in mid-air and hared off 60m to the posts for a stunning try against his old club. Higgins converted.

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Teenager is hoping to make his mark



Chairman Nigel Pearson
Picture: John Hipkiss
Photography

ALBION teenager George Thorne is hoping for a permanent Baggies role after completing a whirlwind week with a dream display at Manchester United.

The 19-year-old midfielder made just his second Premier League start at Old Trafford just two days after being recalled from his successful loan spell at Peterborough.

And, after catching the eye in the absence of injured duo Claudio Yacob and Youssouf Mulumbu, Thorne is hoping to push his first-team claims with Mulumbu set to leave next month for the Africa Cup of Nations.

"Ultimately I want to be a West Brom starting XI player," said Thorne.

"I got my chance because of a few injuries and absences and if I get another chance I'll have to take it and give the gaffer something to think about."

"If a situation arises where the injured players come back fit and I'm not involved we will have to sit down and look at it again."

"But for now I am around the team and involved so we will see what happens in the coming weeks. I hope for more chances, but I'm not sure on what the situation is with Claudio and when he'll be back."

"But if I get another chance, hopefully I can give the gaffer something to think about."

Trotters plot Dawson raid

BOLTON boss Dougie Freedman is plotting a January transfer raid for Albion's Craig Dawson.

The defender has failed to hold down a regular place since signing for the Baggies in 2010 but represented Team GB at London 2012.

Dawson has made 14 appearances for Albion since moving from Rochdale in 2010, although he was loaned back to Dale until 2011 as part of the deal.

He is behind Jonas Olsson and Gareth McAuley in The Hawthorns pecking order and Freedman is keen to take the 22-year-old to the Reebok Stadium.

"Craig Dawson is a player I admire," Freedman said. "We need to make sure the right type of player comes in."

"We need someone who wants to come and play for Bolton, not that we are doing them a favour. Craig certainly fits that bill."

Having a ball

Action from the big rugby derby clash

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Take heart

Week one of training for the annual run

Page 43

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Heathens seal sponsorship for 2013

DUDLEY HEATHENS have sealed a sponsorship deal for the 2013 season.

And the boss of backers Recycled Aggregate Services has praised the passion of the club's supporters.

The Oldbury-based firm joined up with Dudley midway through last season and will again back the former Cradley outfit.

Owner Dave Burns said: "It's the passion of the supporters which really grips you – just like the old Cradley days. I've had a chat with Will Pottinger (team manager) and

Dudley Heathens

Nigel Pearson (chairman) and told them I'm right behind them in what they're doing this season."

"I also told them it's time to forget about missing out on the (National League) title last season and look forward to going one better in 2013." Pearson has revealed season ticket sales up on this time last year.

Many fans wanted Dudley to take the plunge and tackle Premier League racing, but they have again got behind the Heathens at NL level.

"It's truly amazing, the support we are getting," he said. "Looking at the numbers, we are up on the same time last year and that's a true measure of how excited the fans are about our new-look team."

"Naturally a lot of people were very down a couple of months ago after all the injuries and the fact we lost out on the league title by a point."

"We have had to release some great lads from our plans and those decisions were horrible for us to make. Even Chris Van Straaten and Gary Patchett, with all their Elite

League experience, said it was one of the toughest decisions they have known."

"But all our focus is now on 2013 and we want to push forward in a positive manner with some exciting young riders to watch in our team colours. We will open our home season on Tuesday, April 9, at Wolverhampton and we are looking forward to some fantastic fixtures against the likes of Mordenham and Coventry – not to mention Isle of Wight, who have half of our 2012 team on board."

Welborn is all set for that title shot

ROWLEY REGIS boxer Jason Welborn is looking to make the big breakthrough in 2013, writes **Craig Birch**.

Rise from obscurity to be Midlands champion has landed Welborn a shot at British champion Frankie Gavin next month.

The hard-hitting welter-weight, aged 26, overpowered the likes of James Flynn and Scott Haywood to get himself noticed.

Also at Walsall Town Hall on January 18 will be Martin Gethin in a dream scenario for the lightweight – a chance at the British and Commonwealth belts in his home town against Londoner Ben Murphy.

Welborn and Gethin will be the first Black Country fighters since Wolverhampton's Dean Harrison in March 2009 to box for a British title.

That may have been different as new British champion Brian Rose agreed a voluntary defence against Coseley's Jamie Ball, in March, but issues with Sky Sports and the British Boxing Board of Control saw an eliminator with Birmingham's Nasser Al Harbi end in a technical draw.

By October, Ball had retired, troubled by a back injury. Hard luck was a theme for Cradley's Chris Male, Ball's stable-mate, before he got a shot at the English featherweight title after three aborted fights.

A home fight at Dudley's The Venue against Josh Warrington ended in a points defeat.

At age 30, 'the Male Man' may retire but talk is that he will want to get back to titles the hard way.

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketley, Telford. Thursday, January 3, 2013.

WARNING AS MICK THANKS THE FANS

MICK McCARTHY has thanked Wolves fans for their generous reception on his return – and warned that they may yet drive out his successor Stale Solbakken.

The Ipswich boss was afforded warm applause before and after Saturday's game, which his side won 2-0 in his first return to Molineux since being sacked in February after almost six years in charge of the club.

By contrast, the fans chanted 'what a load of rubbish' as their team failed to get an attempt on target.

They also chanted 'you don't know what you're doing' when Solbakken replaced Kevin Doyle with Jermaine Pennant as part of a triple substitution.

McCarthy warned: "The ones who were singing to get me out are doing it to Stale Solbakken."

"Be careful – you might get what you wish for."

Victory was McCarthy's seventh in 12 games in charge during which Ipswich have gone from bottom to within a point of Wolves, who were third when he took over.

Lying

He was touched by the reception. "I'd be lying if I said it was nothing special because it was," he said.

"My last game here (a 5-1 defeat against Albion after which he was sacked) I had to go out of the back door and I'll never forget that."

"That was a really horrible day for me. So to have won and to have had the applause and ovation I got I think it shows that most Wolves fans really thought about me as opposed to the minority that wouldn't let me leave by the front door."

"But that was a lasting memory for me now – being on the pitch and being maybe more used to it."

DK consoled by last Chance try



Dudley Kingswinford winger Duncan Chance plunges over for a dramatic last-minute try in his side's big derby clash at home to Stourbridge Saxons. It was a great moment for Chance – the winger is a former Stourbridge player – but formed only late consolation for DK as Stourbridge took the honours in the National League Two North fixture by winning 29-7 to continue their march back to level three rugby. The Saxons showed excellent running and passing skills to run in four tries through Drew Harper, Ben Hughes, Pete White and Robbie Hurrell. Match report – Page 43